

REDEFINING BOUNDARIES: POLITICAL LIBERATION IN THE ARAB WORLD

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THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2005

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:35 a.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Henry Hyde (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Chairman HYDE. The Committee will come to order.

Mr. Lantos.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Chairman, will you be so kind and yield me 1 minute?

Chairman HYDE. Yes, sir, with pleasure.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Chairman, this is not the first time I publicly admit a failure, but it is a failure of major proportions because I have spent much of the last few months trying to persuade you not to leave this body, but to my great regret, earlier this week you announced that you will not seek another term at the end of the 109th Congress.

As all Members of the Committee on both sides of the aisle agree, you have been a terrific Chairman, a terrific colleague, and a great friend, and at the end of your term, which is a year and a half away, we will have a proper ceremony, but I do not want to let this occasion to go by without telling you, and stating in public, that this Committee will be a very different institution without your leadership.

We look forward to your continuing guidance, judgment, wisdom, and experience for the next year and a half. One could hardly find a better subject than today's subject, hopeful possibilities for reforming the Arab World, to indicate the forward-looking approach you have taken to the work of this Committee.

So may I say, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of all of us on the Democratic side, I am sure on the Republican side, the staffs of our respective sides, how deeply grateful we are for the extraordinary work you have done for the United States and for this Congress.

[Applause.]

Chairman HYDE. I am both embarrassed and speechless. I thank you, Tom. Your friendship has been the high spot of my service on this Committee, and I will never forget it.

Well, okay, thank you very much, and I do have a year and a half of troublemaking ahead. [Laughter.] So I shall not get buried quite yet.

The purpose of today's hearing is to hear from regional experts about the status of political liberalization and prospects for increased reform in a cadre of Arab countries whose evolutionary political development plays a strategic role in determining the long-term march of democracy in the region.

The Arab World is diverse, representing 22 countries, on both the Asian and African Continents. Unfortunately, it would be impossible to discuss all of them here today.

Therefore, the countries we will discuss include Algeria, Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. The selection of these countries was based on several factors.

First, we wanted to make sure to fairly represent the geographical diversity of the region; two, it was important to expand the discourse on this issue by discussing developments in countries within influence and historical leadership in the region for driving change; and three, we wanted to assess the weight and role of people power in the region's political development.

While other Arab countries have made profound developments in reform, they are not necessarily the result of popular demand or domestic pressure, and largely have been initiated by the ruling governments in power.

The Arab World today stands at a crossroads, faced with three fundamental deficits—in freedom, knowledge, and women's rights. The current state of human development of the Arab people is a contradiction of their historical contributions and achievements that have been stepping stones to major advancements in Western civilization.

The recently released *Arab Human Development Report* published by the United Nations Development Program on freedom and good governance is the third in a series written by independent Arab scholars and contributes to an ongoing debate on the impediments to an Arab renaissance. It examines the level of freedom in the Arab World as a measure of progress for its development and states, “. . . [T]hat of all the impediments to an Arab renaissance, political restrictions on human development are the most stubborn.” Furthermore, it states that “. . . [E]stablishing a society of freedom and good governance requires comprehensive reform of governance at three interactive levels: internal, regional and global.”

The growing criticism of Arab Governments by their own citizens and home-grown reform movements has led to an erosion of support of the status quo in the region. Arab Governments are slowly coming to the realization that their broad base of support can no longer be sustained by the fuel of regional conflicts or the usual anti-Western rhetoric.

Instead, Arab Governments, under the threat of losing their power, are coming to the realization that their legitimacy lies within the development of and investment in their own citizens.

Since the launch of the first *Arab Human Development Report*, there have been some internal initiatives and significant breakthroughs leading the way toward possible democratic trends. Several government-supported conferences focusing on reform have taken place, and efforts have been made in increasing citizen participation.

For example, elections in Iraq, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia, and the recent announcement by President Mubarak that there will be a choice between multiple candidates in Egypt's upcoming Presidential elections, have created a sense that there are winds of change in the region. External forces have also increased the discourse on political liberalization in the region.

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the Administration has pursued a forward strategy of freedom to generate reform and democracy promotion in the Arab World. In addition to the millions of dollars spent in democracy and governance programs through the United States Agency for International Development, the Middle East partnership initiative has been the primary vehicle to institute this change.

However, commitment to democratic progress requires an end to double-talk on the part of governments who act contrary to universal values and quell their citizens' socio-political expressions.

As the President recently said in Brussels:

“Yet while our expectations must be realistic, our ideals must be firm and they must be clear. We must expect higher standards from our friends and partners in the Middle East.”

The United States also bears the responsibility of ensuring its credibility in this process. A perception that the United States only supports democratic change where it suits our strategic interests is damaging to our credibility, and hinders our ability to work with Arab reformers, further undermining their efforts. By discussing in a forthright way the democratic development of our allies, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the President should be able to make progress toward dealing with that perception. The Administration and the Congress need to follow up on our declaratory policies.

In addition, the Arab World is not monolithic. The United States needs to carefully craft country-specific strategies that are designed to engage with the realities on the ground. We must not forget the significance of the reality of hope and access to capabilities has in transcending the limitations widespread in the region today.

In June 2002, this Committee held a hearing on the subject of economic development in the Middle East and the prospects for a Marshall Plan in the region. In that hearing, Rima Khalaf Hinidi, the U.N. Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for the Regional Bureau of the Arab States United Nations Development Program, stated:

“Estrangement and frustration arise not only when one is deprived of capability such as quality health and education, but also when one is deprived of the opportunity to use such capabilities in productive employment due to economic stagnation or legal biases, or when such capabilities are stifled by lack of freedoms or poor systems of governments.”

I hope that governments in the region recognize that economic reforms alone will not liberate their people from lagging behind other developed nations. The private sector can play an important role in revitalizing the economies of the area, but they need transparent and accountable governing institutions to create much-needed opportunities. The moment of truth has arrived, and Arabs must

be the ones to lead the way toward the generalization change that will help shape their future. We can only hope that governments in the region will heed internal calls for enhanced freedom. The present situation which seeks to prevent an outbreak of instability and chaos through stifling individual thought cannot be maintained and will inevitably lead to increased societal conflict as the *Arab Human Development Report* notes.

Leaders in governments who are afraid of engaging the visions and aspirations of their people restrict the wave of collective talent that is the engine of human progress.

The people of the Arab region are now experiencing the birth pains of democracy and the sparks of what could be their own kindled renaissance. Will these sparks be stamped out by the jack-boot of history or will they be stoked and nurtured by those with the most to gain as well as by those with the most to lose?

This is a dramatic and important time in the Arab World. This Committee and Congress should study the situation closely, and do all they can to enable the development of indigenous homegrown democratic transformations. The future of the region will be in direct proportion to the freedom afforded to its people.

Through a discovery of their own pluralistic tradition and applying these standards to the current social era, I believe the Arab World will be successful in redefining its own boundaries, and unleashing a wealth of enlightenment for future generations.

We have a distinguished panel of regional experts, and I look forward to their observations and ideas on ways the U.S. can benefit from current trends in the region in our endeavor to promote democracy.

I now yield to my friend and colleague, the Ranking Democratic Member, Congressman Tom Lantos, for any opening remarks he may wish to make.

Mr. LANTOS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Let me first commend you for calling this important hearing and let me congratulate you on a particularly thoughtful and serious opening statement.

Mr. Chairman, I have here my copy of the *Arab Human Development Report*, remarkable document, authored by a team of respected Arab scholars, and published this month under the auspices of the United Nations Development Program. It calls the modern Arab State, and I quote:

“. . . [A] black hole which converts its surrounding social environment into a setting in which nothing moves and from which nothing escapes.”

What an apt image that is. Decrying the lack of critical thinking and open debate in the Arab World, the same report's authors accuse Arab institutions, including the family and the educational systems, of making Arab citizens passive and submissive, and thereby playing into the hands of authoritarian Arab rulers.

The effects are obvious everywhere throughout the Arab World. Freedom House, a Washington institution widely respected for its ratings of political freedom in nations around the world, notes that not one Arab State can be considered free. Only four—Jordan, Ku-

wait, Morocco, and Yemen—are rated partly free under the Freedom House system. All the rest regrettably are rated not free.

Of course, in virtually all Arab States the task of reform is immensely complicated by the presence of Islamic movements that cynically seek to exploit democracy in order to seize power, but have only contempt for democratic principles.

Few of us doubt, Mr. Chairman, that there is an intimate link between this lack of freedom and the fact that the Middle East leads the world in producing terrorists. So it is not only our national values that impel us to support political liberalization of the Arab World, it is our national interest as well.

The past several months have witnessed a number of promising developments in this regard—parliamentary elections in Iraq, Presidential elections in the Palestinian territories, and municipal elections in Saudi Arabia, if one can use the term “elections” when half of the population has no voting rights. Meanwhile in Egypt, President Mubarak has announced that his country will hold multi-candidate Presidential elections this year. Kuwait at last appears to be on the verge of granting women their right to vote in local elections. And most astonishing of all, Mr. Chairman, is the emergence of people power in Lebanon and its success in starting the process of evicting the Syrians.

Parenthetically let me mention that having first visited Lebanon in 1956, I am not at all surprised that the Lebanese people are asserting their powerful desire for living in a free and open society.

Today, you, Mr. Chairman, and I sent a letter urging U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to remain firm in confronting the Damascus regime in order to ensure that Syria does, in fact, withdraw from Lebanon completely and on schedule. We also urge him not to withhold the report that was scheduled for release earlier this week, and which casts serious doubts on Syria’s willingness to withdraw completely. The plan, obviously, is to keep part of the intelligence apparatus newly camouflaged in place.

Mr. Chairman, you and I believe that our Nation must do all it can to show that we are on the side of people everywhere who seek peaceful change on behalf of democracy and fundamental freedom. We must devise new and creative ways to work with our friends around the globe, defend the embers of freedom wherever they may burn.

That is why Congressman Frank Wolf, the Republican Co-Chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, and I, together with Senators John McCain and Joe Lieberman, have introduced the ADVANCE Democracy Act of 2005, to give democratic movements an address at the State Department where they can explain their cause to sympathetic American ears, and to give the Department of State the resources and the incentives needed to promote democracy effectively.

Mr. Chairman, I hope we can learn during this hearing why the Arab World, notwithstanding its immense pool of human talent, has that black hole warping every attempt to alter its authoritarian regimes.

I hope our witnesses will tell us their vision for political reform and how they plan to attain their goals. Most important, I hope they can tell us how the United States can best partner with them

to broaden the boundaries of freedom in their societies for in the cause of democracy, their interests are also our own.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HYDE. Thank you very much, Mr. Lantos.

Because our first witness is in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and will testify on our electronic equipment, we will defer the 1-minute opening statements that we are experimenting with, with permission of the Committee.

Dr. Hatoon Al-Fassi is a Professor of Ancient History of Women at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She is also a columnist for the Arabic journal entitled *Al Eqtisadiyah (The Economy)*.

She is an outspoken advocate of reforms in the Arab World. In addition, she is a leading voice of empowerment for women in Saudi Arabia, and has protested their absence from the country's recent series of municipal elections.

Dr. Fassi obtained her Ph.D. from Manchester University in the United Kingdom.

She will be providing testimony via teleconference from the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh.

Dr. Fassi, we are honored to have you with us today. Please proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF HATOON AL-FASSI, PH.D., PROFESSOR OF ANCIENT HISTORY OF WOMEN, KING SAUD UNIVERSITY, RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA

Ms. AL-FASSI. Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members, Saudi Arabia has recently taken several reform steps, some of which have the potential of improving women's conditions in the country, but more needs to be done.

In 1992, Saudi Arabia adopted for the first time a basic law of government and recognized the consultative council, an appointed body of men.

The nineties witnessed hesitant progress movement toward change and another toward keeping the status quo. In 1995, Crown Prince Abdullah took charge embarking on an ambitious public campaign during which he advocated empowerment of women, but no practical steps were taken to help achieve that.

In 2000, Saudi Arabia signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. That was a major step welcomed by many Saudi women and men as the agreement provided a potential useful legal instrument for women's empowerment. However, it has not had significant impact.

In 2001, the personal I.D. was issued to allow women for the first time an independent I.D. Since 2001, Saudi Arabia has adopted a more open media policy, and that has benefitted the women by discussing women issues which was given a larger space in the media.

By May 1, 2003, occupation of Iraq by American and coalition troops was complete. On May 12, Riyadh witnessed its first terrorist bombing, a campaign of terror that has continued since then.

Following that, movements for reform to counter extremism on one hand and on the other to challenge or to change the country's close relationship with the West.

The word “reform” was on everyone’s lips, including senior government officials. A major speech by the King in May 2003 called for public participation, emphasizing the partnership between women and men in the development of the country.

Shortly thereafter, the Crown Prince launched the first “National Dialogue” which resulted in establishing a Center for National Dialogue. It carried out three more dialogues since then to discuss issues such as extremism, women, and youth. The dialogues were a new venue for breaking more barriers and taboos such as the religious and the gender.

However, it is difficult to measure the impact of these small gatherings held behind closed doors.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished audience, in June 2004 the Council of Ministers adopted a 9-point program to expand on women’s participation in the workplace. Accordingly, many ministries are working on expanding its services and employment range to include women. Earlier this month, a modification to the legal system was announced with a decision to start some specialized courts, including a court for family law. And last week, only last week, April 13, a fatwa to prevent forcing women to marry against their will as part of the “al hajr” tradition was issued and a penalty was to fall on the perpetrator.

Now moving to the elections, in October 2003, the Council of Ministers announced that the country would have municipal elections within a year. The announcement was followed in August by using the long-time-awaited bylaws. The bylaws did not exclude women from participation as candidates, nor as voters, but the general committee for organizing the elections did. It excluded women on the grounds that the committee did not have enough time to accommodate the segregated arrangements.

Therefore, this action called into question earlier public calls for reform, especially in the absence of a strong legal tradition to counterbalance the committee’s decision. A great opportunity was lost to introduce women to public participation without much opposition, religiously or traditionally.

Despite these positive steps, there are still many more issues of great concern to Saudi women which could be summarized in the following: She is considered legally and socially a minor; she is confined to limited areas of educational opportunities; she is restricted in employment opportunities; there are no legal bodies where women could seek support; and finally, she is distanced from any decisionmaking position. The highest and only position a woman is holding is an assistant minister for the Ministry of Education.

Reform in Saudi Arabia is a necessity today. Sharing power with the public is a must. Women’s inclusion in the political, economic, social, educational affairs, and decisions of the country is a strategic choice at this age for the state to survive. It is our challenge to make it come true through our own struggle.

Thank you.

[No prepared statement submitted.]

Chairman HYDE. Thank you, Doctor.

It is a little difficult to understand the testimony, and I am suggesting that if Committee Members have questions, perhaps we could submit them in writing, and Dr. Al-Fassi could answer

them—unless somebody has a burning question that they want to ask right now.

All right. Well, Doctor, we will submit questions in writing, and we deeply appreciate—

Ms. AL-FASSI. It is very hard for me to hear your voice.

Chairman HYDE. I understand. It has been difficult over here too. But we thank you for your testimony and we will submit some questions in writing if you would be kind enough to deal with them. Thank you so much.

Ms. AL-FASSI. Okay. You are welcome.

Chairman HYDE. Dr. Assedine Layachi is an Associate Professor in the Department of Government and Politics at St. John's University in New York. He is originally from Algeria where he was a broadcaster and reporter. He has published numerous materials on politics in the Middle East, and is the recipient of many awards and grants. Dr. Layachi obtained his Ph.D. from New York University.

Dr. Najiib Ghadbian is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Arkansas. Dr. Ghadbian is the author of *Democratization and the Islamists Challenge in the Arab World*. He is a frequent commentator in the international media, and is an expert in Syrian politics. Dr. Ghadbian obtained his Ph.D. from the City University of New York.

Dr. Amr Hamzawy is a noted Egyptian political scientist and is currently a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He is the author of *Civil Society in the Middle East*, and numerous other articles. Dr. Hamzawy obtained his Ph.D. from the Free University of Berlin.

Ms. Amy Hawthorne is a Middle East democracy analyst and former Founding Editor of Carnegie Endowment's *Arab Reform Bulletin*. Prior to joining the Carnegie Endowment, she was a research fellow in Arab politics at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy where she studied U.S. policy toward democratization in the Arab World. In 1991, she was a Fulbright Scholar in Cairo's Women's College of Al-Azhar University.

We will hear from Dr. Layachi first.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HYDE. Yes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. A point of inquiry. Are we going to ask the witnesses to submit their entire testimony for the record, and then ask them to summarize for 5 minutes so that we will have a chance to ask some questions?

Chairman HYDE. That is a splendid idea, Mr. Rohrabacher, and I would ask the witnesses to attempt to condense your statement to about 5 minutes, liberally counted, and the full text of your statements will be made a part of the record without objection.

Now, Dr. Layachi.

STATEMENT OF AZZEDINE LAYACHI, PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY, QUEENS, NEW YORK

Mr. LAYACHI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to be among you here to share with you my take on the situation in Algeria and the latest reforms.

Algeria, as we know, has been going through a very serious crisis, and a crisis that seems to be toward its end. This crisis had begun back in the 1980s and today it appears to be slowly coming out of it. It was a decade of mayhem, the 1990s, which was characterized by a very violent conflict, and which caused the death of close to 200,000 people within 10 years, and was also characterized by deep economic decline and political instability.

The recent developments within the last, say probably, 5 years are much more positive after the Islamist rebellion diminished drastically. Some economic reforms were begun, were started, but the overall situation in the country has not totally improved or improved to the liking of most people.

There were still occasional killings by a few remaining armed Islamists, and the socio-economic conditions of most people have not improved. Most of the necessary economic conditions have not been tackled yet and political change has been too slow to meet the increasing demands for a meaningful political participation—transparency, accountability, and the protection of basic freedoms.

The Algerian crisis resulted from mounting socio-economic difficulties in the 1980s, which in turn were caused by numerous factors, including a failing state-centered economy, the authoritarian nature of the political system, and also external shock such as the 1986 fall of the oil prices by 40 percent.

In the difficult economic conditions of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, there was the Islamist rebellion that compounded or added to the difficulties of the country, and were going to completely stop all economic reforms, and even contribute to the decline of the economic conditions. And that was going to provide even more recruits to the Islamist movement and the conflict was going to continue on until 1997, where one of the groups decided to negotiate with the government for giving up the fight.

That was the beginning of the end of the general rebellion of the Islamists, which finally led to a national accord under President Bouteflika, and under which thousands of Islamists surrendered under an accord that was based on amnesty. A second amnesty is being negotiated now with the remaining armed rebels.

At the level of the institutional changes, I am going to skip the economic reforms. They are very important but I am going to skip over there, and if there are questions about economic reforms which have not really been leading anywhere so far, I will be more than happy to answer questions.

The political reforms initiated in 1989 included constitutional amendments and new laws that allowed the birth of a multi-party system for the first time. This is when Algeria was governed by a one-party system since independence in 1962.

Also, finally, in 1989, there was freedom of association and freedom of the press. This liberalization brought to the fore new political formations that proved capable of mobilizing the masses around a host of issues, including regime change itself. Among them only two types of organizations proved to be very powerful and resilient and constituted change—the Islamists and the Berber parties and associations.

The Islamists were the ones that were going to be more popular and challenging, and they were able to organize themselves very

well, and in fact challenged the system to open itself up, and that is how Algeria ended up having multi-party elections for the first time in 1990 and 1991, and the Islamists had won overwhelmingly. And that was something that ended—the political opening ended with that, and there was even a regression during the period of the war when the Islamists decided to pick up arms in order to try to get back what they thought they had won by the ballots.

The political reforms continue. They resumed in 1995 with the first multi-party Presidential election, which went very well, and President Zeroual had won the election at that time, followed by constitutional amendment. The constitutional amendment introduced new things in the Constitution in the context of liberalizing the political system. However, the many amendments that were introduced were too controversial to really get the consensus required, but the vote passed.

And then what happened is that some of the Islamists that were against violence were incorporated in the political system, and there were two main political parties that joined Parliament through election and have become, in fact, really part of the system. They denounce violence. They declare themselves for democracy and that they have nothing to do with the rebels who have used violence, especially against a civilian population for the last 10 years.

Now, in spite of all these changes, the crisis did not subside and the political system did not improve on the earlier efforts of political liberalization. However, the bulk of the Islamists changed their style and discourse, and seemed to have given up their revolutionary change by violence. The movement now is much more about *Islah*, which is reform, rather than revolution.

Along with a drastically curtailed political violence, the revived legislative process have brought back some sense of normalcy as Presidential succession through multi-candidate balloting has become institutionalized. Even the supremacy of the military in political and economic affairs seems to have also been reduced after the resignation in August 2004 of the top military leader, General Mohamed Lamari. This resignation may have ushered in a transfer of more actual power to the civilian Presidential institution, and the beginning of a slow professionalization of the military establishment.

With the improved security situation, the army began to acknowledge that they should end its political dominance and give the civilian leadership more latitude, one remaining guardian of the republican order. When that becomes a full and tangible reality, Algeria would have made a major step toward a genuine change.

In the face of increasing challenges that the Algerians face today from nature—like the flooding of 2001, the earthquake of 2003, society and the international environment from society as well, the international environment—the Algerian State and its ruling elite are pressed to heed the calls for urgent actions to stop the degradation of the social, economic, political, and security conditions.

The country may be today at the crossroad. It will either pick up the pieces and move toward a brighter, peaceful, and democratic future or descend into yet another cycle of violence and terror,

which may tear the country into pieces run by self-proclaimed emirs, warlords, or even etho-nationalists.

The incumbent leaders, in order not to be swept from power by a much bigger social and political earthquake—which many observers think is still possible, a much bigger earthquake than the one that has happened—need to heed to calls for responsiveness and changes that are emanating from society every day by way of peaceful protests and even violent outbursts in many towns and villages around the country.

The longer the economic and social crisis lasts, which is the case today, and the more the living conditions worsen for most people, the more attractive open rebellion will again become. The ability of the incumbent regime to solve this crisis and halt the dangerous erosion of its legitimacy and that of the state, is as crucial for the curtailment of the revolutionary fervor and appeal which the Islamists may still have, and which other groups may acquire.

With this kind of image of the current situation, there were many promising signs. There was a tremendous potential for gearing the country in the right direction. The society is trying to fight to really have access to public policymakers, to make a dent in the system that has existed since independence. However, there were very strong and persistent limitations on that. Multi-parties are one thing, but do political parties have an impact on public policy?

The political parties that were born after the opening in 1989 are now totally removed from their base, and people have started really taking matters in their own hands by organizing demonstrations, roadblocks in towns and cities because political parties themselves, which were the result of political liberalization, have also been failing them, and this is a very dangerous—a very dangerous evolution which could be very much avoided if more efforts are made into integrating society into the political process through organized and representative institutions and organizations.

In the case of—I am just going to finish with one word on the U.S. foreign policy with just one thought, which I will be happy to go back to, and I will just be borrowing from a recent *Financial Times* article, April 14, 2005, by William Willis, and it says the following about the situation in the area:

“Meanwhile, Algeria is curiously absent from both Washington’s hit list and Arab States that should move faster on political reforms as well as those efforts that are deemed worthy of an occasional pat on the back.”

In a sense, we just heard that Algeria was not on the list of countries that are open, politically open, and here is the United States trying to promote democracy, liberalization, and the better future for those societies. Why is there not more or a stronger message to some countries in comparison to others? Why are there some countries that are specifically targeted for pressure on political liberalization and economic politicalization while others which are in need of such measures are not being targeted as well?

And the case of Algeria, I think, is good. Algeria is moving in the good direction, and that movement needs nurturing, nurturing through a variety of means, and they don’t have to be expressly ex-

pressed. They could be very discreet and we could talk about some possible measures.

I do not want to take up more time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Layachi follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AZZEDINE LAYACHI, PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY, QUEENS, NEW YORK

While the end of the Cold War brought with it hope for a positive change around the world and did actually stimulate tangible progress in some developing countries, the MENA region seems to have remained relatively unaffected. Important social and economic mutations have taken place in the region in the last two decades, but the political and economic systems have been very slow at adapting—if at all—to them. The globalization phenomenon and the latest wave of democratization do not seem to have affected the region positively. In many countries, entirely new generations are governed by old elites that are having increasing difficulty in maintaining the internal status quo and containing the forces of change.

Economic reforms have failed to overhaul most economic structures and the state remains the most important agent and determinant of economic activity. The political system is still largely unchanged in spite some movement toward political liberalization. Civil society remains as elusive as democracy, and state power is always in the hand of powerful monarchies, civilian-military coalitions, and conservative bureaucrats. Power is largely exercised in an authoritarian way, and the official discourse continues to pay lip service only to the notions of free elections and democracy. A token moderate opposition may be allowed to thrive here and there, but any radical challenge has usually been met with a swift and harsh repression.

However, these general observations do not mean that the MENA region has been frozen in time or unmoved by internal and external forces of change. Change has been happening, but it has been less positive than it could be, and less dramatic than it may have been if the policy choices made were more adequate and if the regional and international environments have been more encouraging and less restraining and threatening. The case of Algeria serves as a good illustration of this.

This paper address the crisis that Algeria has been experiencing and the economic and political reforms it has been attempting to implement as a response to such crisis. Since the political crisis was largely the result of an economic crisis, political reforms cannot be address without examining, at the same time, the reforms undertaken at the economic level.

Algeria has been facing serious political and economic difficulties since the late 1980s. Today, however, it appears to be slowly coming out a decade-long mayhem characterized by a very violent conflict, economic decline and political instability. Political violence, which has taken the lives of close to 200,000 people in 10 years, has drastically diminished and aggregate economic indicators have substantially improved. Recent reports from the IMF and the World Bank indicate that Algeria was one of few countries to have contributed to an unprecedented rise in economic growth rate (5.6%) for the entire MENA region. However, these positive developments do not necessarily mean that Algeria's crisis is over. There are still occasional killings by a few remaining armed Islamist groups and the social and economic conditions of most people have not improved. Most of the necessary economic reforms have not been tackled yet, and political change has been too slow to meet the increasing demand for a meaningful political participation, transparency, accountability and the protection of basis freedoms.

ALGERIA'S ECONOMIC CRISIS AND REFORMS

The Algerian crisis resulted from mounting socio-economic difficulties in the 1980s, which in turns were caused by numerous factors, including a failing state-centered economic system; the authoritarian nature of the political system; and external economic shocks.

After independence, and as capitalism was eschewed because of its association with inequality, injustice, and colonialism, Algeria opted for a socialist model of development which put all responsibility in the hands of the state in the areas of both production and service. The state became responsible for production, employment, welfare and social protection. After its initial success in getting economic development under way and basic social needs satisfied, the development strategy started showing signs of limitation and exhaustion. By 1979, the negative aspects and effects of a state-centered development based on oil-rent became apparent. They included a bloated bureaucracy, distribution bottlenecks, a rampant inflation, struc-

tural dislocations, and a poor agricultural performance, which, in turn, stimulated urban migrations, food scarcity and a growing income inequality. This strategy had also produced a society that was very dependent on the state for everything without being required to be productive.

In the early 1980s, the state attempted a series of homemade reforms, which failed to halt the decline. These reforms were ill conceived, incoherent, and poorly implemented. As such, they contributed to worsening the economy and social conditions. Industrial investment fell by 21 per cent between 1980 and 1981 alone, and imports decreased by 35 per cent. Many industrial projects were shelved and several international contracts were canceled.

When the world oil prices fell by 40% in 1986, the situation became critical for a state and a society that depended almost exclusively on oil revenue. By 1988, the industrial output had dramatically declined and public enterprises had a total deficit of \$18.5 billion.¹ The state was almost bankrupt and social inequality had increased to a point where five per cent of the population took 45% of the national income while 50% of the population shared less than 22% of such income.² Inflation hit an annual rate of 42% while 22% of the work force had become unemployed. As 125,000 more workers—mostly in the public sector—were laid off by 1991, the social situation reached a critical low point.³ Furthermore, corruption spread throughout state institutions, and the external debt increased to \$26,557 billion by 1991, with an export-earning ratio of 193% and a servicing ratio of 73.7%.⁴

As a result of the initial reforms and reduced resources throughout the 1980s, the state retreated from some economic and social service areas and even law and order. This led to the worsening of the social conditions for the less fortunate, the development of a black market, illegal activities, higher crime rates, corruption and the spread of moral and behavioral restrictions in public places by uncontrolled Islamist groups.

It was in this context that, in October 1988, that Algeria experienced the worst riots since independence. After an initial state repression, which left 500 people dead within a week, the governing elite suddenly engaged the country in a sweeping political liberalization that ended the rule of the one-party system and opened the way to a variety of political organizations and to an unprecedented freedom of expression and association.

Even though this sudden and substantial political opening did not last long (1989–1991), it nevertheless carried the seeds of some fundamental changes that were going to affect the evolution of the country for the following years. It did not amount to amount to a regime change, but contributed to a substantial and irreversible transformation of the political map of Algeria. (See Political Reforms section below)

Algeria's development challenges were further compounded by increasing poverty, among rural and urban populations, which was exacerbated by the lack of employment, empowerment and access to social services.

Also, over the years, the ruling elite consolidated its political power through control of economic rent and some of its members resisted liberalization. The resistance to change came also from public company managers, top bureaucrats, labor unions, and some powerful civilian and military individuals who benefited from the de-factor monopolies they set from themselves in the lucrative import-export sector and from the economic protectionism.

Besides this strong resistance to necessary reforms, the war waged by the Islamists starting 1992 was going to slow down the non-oil economic activities and to throw more people into poverty as a result of the destruction of economic and social infrastructure and of massive displacements of population in several hotbeds of the rebellion. Some studies have estimated more than one million people were displaced and that their large majority is still displaced. "Despite government incentives, most are discouraged to return by the security situation and lack of basic infrastructure in their home villages."⁵

Structural Adjustment: Excellent Aggregate Results, But . . .

In this already difficult context, and because of it, the government, in exchange for debt rescheduling, accepted in 1994 a Structural Adjustment Program sponsored

¹ Abed Charef, *Octobre*, (Algiers: Laphomic Editions, 1990), p. 16.

² *El Moudjahid*, (January 29, 1990).

³ Zakya Daoud, "L'Economie du Maghreb en Difficulté," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, (June 1991), p. 26.

⁴ The World Bank, *World Bank Report 1993*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁵ "Profile Of Internal Displacement: Algeria." A report compiled from the Global Internally Displaced Populations Database of the Norwegian Refugee Council, online at <http://www.idpproject.org>.

by the IMF and the World Bank. Among the many measures entailed by the program, those with a direct social impact included the lifting of price controls; the ending of price subsidies for basic consumption items; the introduction of fees for education and health services; and the layoff of workers as a result of the restructuring, selling or closing of public enterprises.

Since 1994, stringent austerity measures and good hydrocarbon revenues have helped stabilize the declining economy and improve aggregate national indicators. The inflation rate was brought down from 30 per cent in 1995 to 0.3% in 2000 and 2.8% in 2003. The state budget went from a deficit of 9% of the GDP in 1993 to a surplus of 9.9%. The balance of trade surplus went from \$4.1 billion in 1996 to \$12.3 billion in 2001⁶ and \$11.5 billion in 2003. The hard currency reserves increased from \$1.5 billion in 1993, to \$23 billion in 2003⁷ and probably around \$30 billion in 2004. The capacity of the country to repay its external debt improved markedly and the total amount owed decreased from \$33.23 billion in 1996 to \$22 billion in 2002; debt servicing went from consuming 45% of export revenues in 1998 to 20% in 2001⁸ and 18% in 2003.

In contrast to the substantially positive results they generated at the aggregate level, stabilization and restructuring policies had many negative effects on the socio-economic conditions of a large number of people. "Ordinary people have derived almost no benefit from these riches. The poverty gap has widened . . ." ⁹ In 2002, the National Economic and Social Council (CNES) indicated that "the economic and social circumstances have not experienced . . . a significant inflection, in spite of the consolidation of the financial bonanza." ¹⁰ Even worse, the 2004 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) ranks Algeria 108th in the Human Development Index in a list of 177 countries.

The reforms imposed more hardship on people with fixed and low incomes and the unemployed. Between 1994 and 1998, 360,000 workers were laid off. Restructured public companies lost 164,283 employees—one third of their workforce. The largest loss of employment was in the productive sectors (mostly in industry and construction). The unemployment rate reached 30% in 1998, hitting mostly the young. ¹¹ Female unemployment rose to 38% as more women started looking for jobs. ¹² Among the unemployed, 68% are young first-time job seekers who were thrown out of school prematurely. ¹³ There are today some 100,000 unemployed school graduates.

Algeria's population of 31 million has a growth rate 1.8% and a fertility rate of 2.45 children per women. Forty per cent of the population is under 15 years of age and 70% below 30. Most of the unemployed today are youth under age 25. To absorb the newcomers in the labor market, the economy would need to grow at a sustained rate of 7% to 8% for several years, and must create at least 300,000 a year. If not enough jobs are created to keep up with the demand, Algeria will remain the country with the highest unemployment rate in the region's states and risk another social and political explosion in the near future.

The Informal Economy

Because of the hardship caused by a massive exclusion from the formal job market, employment in the informal sector increased tremendously in the last ten years, reaching 17% of all employed people in 2003, up from 15% in 1999, and it continues to increase. If agricultural is excluded, this share reaches 21.9%. In 2001, it employed around 1.321 million people.

According to the World Bank, this sector's employment has grown at 11% a year between 1992 and 1996, while formal employment grew at by only 2%. The main employment activities in the informal sector are the service sector, construction and public works, and manufacturing and assembly. Moreover, 64% of employers do not

⁶ Arezki Daoud, "Algeria Outlook." *North Africa Journal*, (September 1997); "Algeria's Trade Surplus Reach \$7.5 Billion For the First eight Months of '01," *The North Africa Journal*, (29 September, 2001), online at <http://www.north-africa.com>.

⁷ Commissariat à la planification, Office Nationale des Statistiques, Banque d'Algérie, ECOTECHNICS. Online at www.algeria-interface.com, March 29, 2004.

⁸ "Algeria-Global Economy," *The North Africa Journal*, 116, (21 November, 2001). Online at journal@gis.net. Accessed 21 November, 2001.

⁹ Ignacio Ramonet, "Algeria: The Unforgiven," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 2001.

¹⁰ National Economic and Social Council, *Rapport sur la économique et sociale du 1er semestre 2002* (Algiers : CNES 2002), online at <http://cnes.dz>, quoted in Ivan Martin, "Algeria's Political Economy (1999-2002) : An Economic Solution to the Crisis?" *The Journal of North African Studies* 8:2, Summer 2003, p. 35.

¹¹ *Liberté* [Algeria], "La Mauvaise Note du CNES," April 13, 1998, p. 3.

¹² Conseil National Economique et Social, *Rapport National Sur le Développement Humain 1998*, (Algiers: CNES, May, 1999), p. 46.

¹³ *Ibid.*

subscriber to the mandatory social security contributions, and many of them pay their worker well below the minimum wage.¹⁴ In addition to employment, all transactions in hundreds of informal markets are estimated today to account for 35% of total commerce activity in the country. The loss for the treasury is estimated to be \$500 million a year in uncollected taxes.

The Reforms

For most of the last decade, and except for stabilization actions undertaken under the aegis of the international institutions, economic reforms remained vague and slow because of political instability, bureaucratic sluggishness of an inefficient bureaucracy, as well as resistance to change coming from some members of the power elite, the unions, and the managers of state companies. The country was frozen in time in the face of a fast and dangerous decline. The only thing that was realized was making the country solvent again thanks to the structural adjustment agreement. Almost nothing was being done about restructuring the economy. It is only after political stability returned with the election of Bouteflika as president, that some relatively substantial discussion about a host of reforms has been engaged.

The Reforms Basket since 1999

Reforming the state

After having consolidated his power position in the system, President Bouteflika started tackling some major problems such as the inefficacy and lack of transparency of the public administration, in particular, and the state institution in general. Even before then, and because of his belief that one of the sources of Algeria's ills is the state itself, he created in November 2000 a committee for Structures and Missions Reforms whose objective was to study and evaluate all aspects of the foundations, organization and functioning of the state and to propose state-wide reforms. He also, started tackling corruption and money laundering (the case of Khalifa Airways, among others), the reform of the educational system, and that of the judicial system. Action in all these areas has not been completed and is proceeding at a slow pace.

Resuming Development

In 2002, the government initiated a special \$7 billion investment plan for economic revival between 2002 and 2004, and \$50 billion between 2004 and 2009. The investments will be made primarily in new housing construction, roads and agriculture. It is feared, however, that this massive injection of capital in the economy may not have the expected effects because most of the money will be used for infrastructural development, not production and employment creation.

On January 15, 2000, Finance Minister Abdelhamid Benachenhou announced the plans of reforms in the areas of taxation, the management of public expenditures and public debt and the banking system. Steps toward these reforms, especially taxation and the banking system, have been moving very slowly.

Last year, the government announced that the economy had grown by a healthy 6.8% rate in 2003. This was mostly due to a 27% agriculture growth rate and an 8% rate in the energy sector. The industrial sector, which has been declining in the last decade, grew by 1.2% only. When hydrocarbons and agriculture are excluded, the economy's growth rate was 4.4% only, thanks to the construction (5.8%) and services (5.7%) sectors.

According also to government figures, unemployment declined for the first time in 2003. It was 23.7%, down from 35% in the previous years. In addition, 905,000 new jobs were recently created in the productive sector within the previous four years. However, since 300,000 new jobs must be created every year in order to meet the yearly new demand for employment, this job increase fall short of such need.

Privatization

It has also moved slowly even though Algeria needs to balance its healthy levels of foreign investment in oil and gas with non-oil-sector investment in order to avoid the pitfall of 1986. In 2000, the government announced a sweeping plan for the privatization of public companies. Even the Sonatrach, the single, state-owned, hydrocarbons company, was no longer taboo and would be eventually open to private capital. The monopoly of state in the telecommunications sector—telephone and internet—is also set to end.

In February 2005, the government announced the list of 942 public enterprises to be partially or totally privatized, out of total of 1,280. The only exceptions announced were those of the giant oil and gas company, Sonatrach, the railways com-

¹⁴ "Sizing the Informal Sector in Algeria," *The North Africa Journal*, August 4, 2004.

pany SNTF, and the Press and Communication Group, all three deemed strategic for the time being. Banks are not on the list yet, but the government has not excluded the possibility of their sale to the private sector.

Trade Liberalization

Trade liberalization is still at an infant stage, as the country keeps resisting openness until its non-oil economy gets on its feet. However, the Free Trade Association with the European Union signed last year will put increased pressure to liberalize trade sooner rather than later. Furthermore, Algeria's desire to join the World Trade Organization will increase that pressure.

Agriculture

Agriculture has enjoyed a marked recovery from its crisis of the 1980s and 1990s. Such recovery was aided by changes in the old restrictive laws on land ownership and exploitations and on product marketing, as well as major public investments in the creation of jobs and production units. Improvement in the country's income made such recovery possible as some \$1.2 billion were invested through the new National Agricultural Development Plan (PNDA). However, in contrast to supports given to other sectors of the economy, this one is far below its needs. In spite of that, in 2003, the agricultural output grew by a 23.88%, up from 8% two years earlier.¹⁵ In spite of this market progress, the country is in dire need for an agribusiness infrastructure for food processing, notably since there is a rising demand for its products. While the state is not interested in investing in it, private operations remain small and in need of encouragement.

POLITICAL REFORMS

The political reforms initiated in 1989 included constitutional amendments and new laws that allowed the birth of a multiparty system, independent associations and a free press. This liberalization brought to the fore new political formations that proved capable of mobilizing the masses around a host of issues, including regime change itself. Among them, only two types of organization proved to be powerful, resilient and constantly challenging: the Islamist and the Berber parties and associations.

The Islamists

While the Berber-based organizations have been hindered by their limited social and geographic base (i.e., ethnic militants in a small region), the Islamist organizations proved to be more appealing and more powerful because of their much wider appeal and their call for a radical change. They welcomed the political opening and formed several parties, including the Front of Islamic Salvation (FIS), which won overwhelmingly in the first multiparty local elections of June 1990, upstaging thereby the ruling party, the National Liberation Front (FLN). Encouraged by the momentum of this electoral victory and by their rising popularity, the Islamists demanded the full implementation of the promises on political opening, mainly free elections for a new president and parliament. Before the government gave in to the last demand, a wide Islamist-sitting in Algiers was violently broken up by the police and the two leaders of the banned FIS were arrested and later sentenced to a 12-year jail term. In the first round of parliamentary elections held on December 26, 1991, the FIS captured 188 out of 430 parliamentary seats, with 47.28% of all votes, while the FLN obtained 15 seats only and The Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS)—a Berber-based party—won 26 seats.

Fearing an Islamist-controlled parliament, the military pushed president Bendjedid to resign in January 1992, canceled the electoral results, banned the FIS and arrested thousands of Islamist militants.¹⁶ The government's repression and recanting on its promise of political liberalization led the Islamist opposition to go underground and resume the strategy of political violence that was initiated in the 1980s by Mustapha Bouyali.

¹⁵ "Algeria: Agriculture Output Up 24% in 2003. \$1.2 Billion Poured in Agriculture in the Past 3 Years," *The North Africa Journal* 147 (June 2004, published online on July 14, 2004). The figure given here might be slightly different from those given by the government or other sources.

¹⁶ It became known later that, President Bendjedid and some FLN leaders, after learning the preliminary results of the first round of the 1991 parliamentary elections, began negotiating with the Islamists a cohabitation scheme according to which Bendjedid would keep the presidency, the Islamists would control non-strategic ministries such as education, justice and religious affairs, and the FLN would have the technical ministries. The military leadership did not agree to that.

The conflict forestalled any hope of a genuine political opening and an end to the authoritarian rule that has characterized Algeria since its independence in 1962. It also halted economic development and contributed to a drastic decline by causing a substantial destruction of social and economic infrastructures and by isolating the country from its economic partners. Political violence was directed against not only the state, but also civilians opposing the religious groups or suspected by them of collaborating with the state,¹⁷ and foreigners. The government's response to the Islamist violence also left scores of people dead, jailed, or unaccounted for.

According to several reports by various international organizations, the Islamists, especially the notorious Armed Islamist Groups (GIA) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) accounted for most of the killings and destruction, but government security forces were also blamed for abusing human rights and failing to protect civilians from attacks.

Since 1992, four presidents (Mohamed Boudiaf who was assassinated in June 1992, Ali Kafi, Liamine Zeroual who resigned before his term ended, and Abdelaziz Bouteflika), and several prime ministers and their respective cabinets, took turns in trying to solve the multi-dimensional crisis faced by Algeria.

It was only in 1997 that hope appeared for an end to the tragedy. In that year, the government brokered an amnesty deal with one of the major armed groups, the Islamic Army of Salvation (AIS). The AIS unilaterally halted its operation until a formal deal was made in 1999 when President Bouteflika's "National Concord" law amnestied thousands of armed rebels. However, other deadly groups, such as the GIA and the GSPC, refused to surrender and continued their violent attacks.

The Berber Militants

With regards to the demands of Berber militants, Berber the 1996 constitutional amendments recognized that the Algerian identity has Arab, Islamic and Amazigh ingredients. Also, a High Council for Amazigh Culture was set up in May 1995 and teaching of Tamazight was allowed to develop. However, a recent showdown between the militants and the governments has focused on several issues, including that of making Berber a national and official language. The government acquiesced to this demands but plans on submitting the change to a referendum, something that the Berberists reject. The Berber challenge has lost much of its energy since it was reinvigorated in 2001, but remains a potentially destabilizing phenomenon.¹⁸

The Impact of Political Reforms

Several political changes and reforms have taken place since the mid-1990s. They were attempts to diffuse the Islamist rebellion, but they did not succeed in that until the end that decade. There were two multiparty presidential elections in 1995 and 1999, a major constitutional amendment in 1996, and parliamentary and municipal elections in 1997 and 2002.

The 1996 constitutional reform was expected to help establish a new legitimacy for the political system and strengthen the new political institutions, but many amendments were too controversial to stimulate the much-wished-for consensus. While declaring Islam the state's religion, the amended constitution prohibited the creation of parties on a "religious, linguistic, racial, gender, corporatist or regional" basis and the use of partisan propaganda based on these elements. The reform also created a second parliamentary chamber, "the Council of the Nation," the third of which is appointed by the president and the rest elected by indirect suffrage. Finally, the powers of the president were reinforced over those of parliament and the prime minister.

In 1997, parliamentary election reinstated parliamentary life—which was suspended in 1992—and allowed two moderate Islamist parties, the *Harakat Muftam'a al-Silm* (Movement of Society for Peace, MSP) and *Harakat al-Nahda*, known as Ennahda, to win respectively 69 and 34 seats out of 380 and to control seven ministerial posts in the government. In a paradoxical turn of events, the MSP of Mahfoud Nahnah ended up being part of a coalition government that included the conservative FLN and the new pro-establishment party, the National Democratic

¹⁷The Islamist violence began well before the cancellation of the 1992 elections, from the time of the Bouyali actions in the 1980s, to the attack in November 1991 against border guards in Guemmar, near the Tunisian border, by a group of "Afghans" (name given to Algerian veterans of the war in Afghanistan).

¹⁸For more on this, see Azzedine Layachi, "Ethnicité et politique en Algérie: Entre inclusion et particularisme berbère," in *Naqd* (a journal of social critique), December 2004 ; Azzedine Layachi, "The Berbers in Algeria: Politicization of Ethnicity and Ethnicization of Politics," in Maya Shatzmiller, Ed., *Nationalism and Minority Identities in Islamic Societies*, (McGill University Press, 2005); and "Que veulent les Berbères?", in *Jeune Afrique – L'Intelligent*, Paris, 24 April 2001.

Rally (RND), which was created a few months earlier to lend support to President Liamine Zeroual. This alliance of convenience became known as “the islamo-conservative” alliance.

In spite of all these changes, the crisis did not subside and the political system did not improve on the earlier efforts at political liberalization. However, the bulk of Algerian Islamists changed their style and discourse and seemed to have given up on revolutionary change by violence. The movement reverted to the reformist strategy (*Islah*) and accepted to work within the confines of the nation-state (rather than Islamic *Umma* at large) and within the limits of the constitution; it also seems to have reconciled itself with the idea of democracy, women’s inclusion and political tolerance. However, a remaining small Islamist faction, represented by the Salafist tendency, still holds ultra conservative views and has not given up on revolutionary change.

Contrary to people’s hopes, the institutional changes and elections that took place since the mid-1990s has not ended the crisis and did not move Algeria closer to stability, security and democracy. These changes did not amount to a fundamental change notably because the regime remained unaffected and the power configuration among the ruling elite and between them and society did not change substantially.

In April 2004, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika’s sweeping re-elections was attributed mostly to his ending of the Islamic uprising through the “National Concord” law. He recently proposed a second amnesty for the remaining rebels who want to surrender. Meanwhile, the continuing insurgency means that Algeria’s crisis is not wholly over; also, some fundamental constitutional questions remain unresolved, such as the role of the military in politics, the presidential prerogatives, judicial independence and, more generally, the problem of establishing law-bound government.

Along with the drastically curtailed political violence, the revived legislative and electoral processes have brought back some sense of normalcy as presidential succession through multi-candidate balloting has become institutionalized. Even the supremacy of the military in political and economic affairs seems to have been reduced after the resignation in August 2004 of the top military leader, General Mohamed Lamari.¹⁹ This resignation may have ushered in a transfer of more actual power to the civilian presidential institution, and the beginning of a slow professionalization of the military establishment. With the improved security situation, the army began to acknowledge that it should end its political dominance and let the civilian leadership more latitude, while remaining the guardian of the republican order. When that become a full and tangible reality, Algeria would have made a major step toward a genuine change.

CONCLUSION

The Algeria of today does not have much in common with that of the 1960s and 1970s. It has also come a long way since the height of the multidimensional crisis of the 1990s, but still has a lot to do in order to regain its balance and resume growth and development in a stable political and social environment.

The state is caught in the difficult role of having to resolve a deep socio-economic crisis while, at the same time, continue opening the economy to global capital, enacting more austerity measures, and maintaining a strict budgetary discipline. In other words, the neo-liberal agenda for development has put the state on a collision course with society, as witness by recent series of strikes in the public sector, and recurring village unrests.

In the face of increasing challenges from nature (flooding in 2001 and earthquake in 2003), society, and the international environment, the Algerian state and its ruling elite are pressed to heed calls for urgent actions to stop the degradation of the social, economic and security conditions. Transition theory and empirical evidence suggest that as the economy deteriorates and the state is unable to halt the decline, its bargaining power diminishes while that of the opposition increases. If this generalization holds in the case of Algeria, the economic crisis, in combination with recurrent societal unrest, may extract from the ruling elite the necessary concessions for a meaningful change. Only when that change brings about stable representative institutions that are accountable to voters and empowered to make tangible decisions, would consequent and adequate social and economic policies become possible in Algeria. In other words, real change in the social and economic arenas requires a substantial change in the command structure and the institutional setting.

¹⁹Lamari was replaced by Major General Ahmed Gaïd Salah as Chief of Staff of the National Popular Army (ANP).

The country may be today at a crossroad: it will either pick up the pieces and move toward a brighter, peaceful and democratic future, or descend into yet another cycle of violence and terror which may tear the country into pieces run by self-proclaimed emirs, warlords and ethno-nationalists.

Even the most optimist observer cannot help but note that the road ahead is going to be difficult and long. An optimist may see Algeria as having come a long way from the days when it was a country pacified by oil-rent subsidies and welfare offered by an authoritarian rule that drew legitimacy from the war of independence and the distributive policy.

Now that the subsidies and the welfare benefits have been drastically curtailed, society is no longer docile, and the authoritarian rule has slightly retreated as a result of a series of assaults against it at home and from abroad. This optimist perspective on Algeria's evolution since the 1980s admits that the road ahead is likely to be difficult and long.

Even though the essential nature of the regime has not changed yet after these past traumatic years and the reforms that followed them, society has changed; it is better armed to defend its interests and is no longer afraid to challenge the ruling establishment.

The Islamists played a major role in affecting this change. The Islamist mobilization politicized a huge number of young people who came to realize that change required their active involvement. Unfortunately, when that involvement changed from charitable work, Da'wa and peaceful street protest, to an armed rebellion, the Islamist movement, instead of being the factor of change which it had started out to be, turned into a factor of regression because they resorted to violence against innocent civilians because they stimulated a violent state response and major restrictions on the newly acquired political freedoms.

Given the ideological underpinning of mainstream Islamism, given the nature and resiliency of the authoritarian rule, and given the rebellious nature of the Algerian society, the immediate future is likely to be a difficult one. For a substantial positive change to happen in the country, there is a need for the constitution of a wide democratic front that would have to push for peaceful change with a disarming persistence. Before they can be part of such front, the Islamists and the seculars must change the way they perceive and relate to each other, and must also agree on a minimal plan of action.

The Islamists would have to decide whether they could live with the following three requirements: a man-made constitutional order that is characterized by the rule of a law accepted by all; tolerance of opposing views and beliefs; and regular leadership change by way of elections. It is only under these conditions that democratization could survive the Islamists' participation.

The seculars, in turn, would have to accept the fact that political Islam will remain a very important actor in Algerian politics and society and, therefore, expect Islam to play some substantial role in the way the country is governed. Finding a compromise between the two tendencies will be challenging but not impossible.

As for the incumbent leaders, in order not to be swept from power by a much bigger social and political earthquake than the one has just happened, they need to head to calls for responsiveness and change that are emanating from society every day by way of peaceful protests and violent outbursts in many towns and villages around the country.

The longer the economic and social crises lasts, and the more the living conditions worsen for most people, the more attractive open rebellion will again become. The ability of the incumbent regime to solve these crises and halt the dangerous erosion of its legitimacy and that of the state is thus crucial for the curtailment of the revolutionary fervor and appeal which the Islamists may still have or which other groups may acquire.

The solution to the problems faced today by the average Algerian resides in major changes in many areas, including the economy and the political system and culture. The system has to be more inclusive and in a meaningful way. Since the Islamist tendency is strongly imbedded in the social and ideological landscape of Algeria, its moderate expression ought to remain in the political process. This will help marginalize radical tendencies while lending more legitimacy to such process. Also, the incumbent elite may find it useful to put an end to the marginalization of the secular opposition, commonly known as the "democratic opposition," for it will be more than helpful in balancing off the Islamist tendency.

The current inclusion of some opposition forces in the political process is a positive development, even it has not yet been consequential. It is certainly a far cry from an earlier period when such opposition was solely shunned and repressed. Reversing the inclusionary trend can carry a heavy price and may no longer be an option.

APPENDIX

RESULTS OF THE 1997 AND 2002 PARLIAMENTARY AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Table 1. Party Results of the Parliamentary Elections of May 30, 2002.

Party	Number of votes	% of valid votes	Number of Seats
FLN	2,618,003	35.27	199
MRN/El-Islah	705,319	9.5	43
RND	610,461	8.23	47
MSP/HMS	523,464	7.05	38
Independents	365,594	4.92	30
PT	246,770	3.3	21
FNA	113,700	1.53	8
Ennahda	48,132	0.65	1
PRA	19,813	0.27	1
MEN	14,465	0.19	1
Total Valid Votes:	7,420,867		

Source: Constitutional Council (3 June 2002) posted online at <http://www.mae.dz> and www.elwatan.com

Table 2. Voter Participation in the Parliamentary Elections of May 30, 2002

Registered voters	17,951,127
Actual number of voters	8,288,536
Number of spoiled ballots	867,669
Total valid votes	7,420,867
Participation rate (national and international)	46.17%
Participation rate (Algerians abroad only)	20.84%

Source: Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Algérie Presse Service, online at <http://www.mae.dz> and www.aps.dz

Table 3. Results of the 1997 and 2002 Parliamentary Elections

Party	1997 % of Votes	2002 % of Votes	1997 Seats	2002 Seats
RND	38.1	8.23	156	47
MSP/HMS	16.7	7.05	69	38
MRJ/Ennahda	9.9	0.65	34	1
MRN/Al-Islah	—	9.5	—	43
FLN	16.1	35.27	62	199
FFS	5.7	—	20	—
RCD	4.8	n/a	19	n/a
PT	2.1	3.33	4	21
Independents	5	4.92	11	30

Total seats in the APN: 380 in 1997, 389 in 2002.

Note: MRN/*El-Islah* was created in 1998, and the FFS and RCD boycotted the 2002 elections.

Sources: <http://www.mae.dz>, <http://electionworld.org/election/algeria.htm>

Table 4. Results of the Municipal Elections of October 10, 2002

Parties	Votes	Seats	Percentage
FLN	2 501 003	4878	36.60
RND	1 263 461	2827	21.21
ISLAH	960 218	1237	9.28
HMS	679 674	989	7.42
Independents	456 628	869	6.52
FFS	198 023	684	5.13
FNA	279 937	532	3.99
PRA	199 341	305	2.29
AHD 54	120 136	206	1.55
MNJA	84 011	126	0.95
RA	70 905	114	0.86
MEN	70 847	112	0.84
Ballot 105	64 000	91	0.68
RPR	44 707	65	0.49
RA	43 852	64	0.48
NAHDA	57 487	50	0.38
UDL	33 188	47	0.35
RNC	33 476	44	0.33
PRP	26 713	41	0.31
MJD	13 439	19	0.14
Ballot 161	14 317	14	0.11
MNE	7 796	6	0.05
RUN	6 224	6	0.05
ALLIANCES	3 851	3	0.02
TOTAL	7,233,234	1,3329	100

Source: Ministry of Interior and Local Collectivities, posted online on October 11, 2002.

Table 5. Voter Participation in the Municipal Elections of October 10, 2002

Registered voters:	15 566 397
Actual number of voters	7 800 763
Total valid votes:	7 233 234
Number of spoiled ballots:	567 529
Percentage of voter turnout:	50.11%

Source: Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Algérie Presse Service, online at <http://www.mae.dz> and www.aps.dz

List of Some Political Parties

FLN	Front de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Front)
FFS	Front des forces Socialistes
FNA	Front National Algérien
MEN	Mouvement de l'Entente Nationale
MJD	Mouvement pour la Jeunesse et la Démocratie
MNE	Mouvement National D'espérance
MNJA	Mouvement National de la Jeunesse Algérienne
MRN/ <i>al-Islah</i> :	Mouvement de la Réforme Nationale/ <i>Harakat al-Islah al-Watani</i>
MSP/HMS:	Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix/ <i>Harakat Moujtama'a al-Silm</i>
PRA	Parti du Renouveau Algérien
PRP	Parti Republicain Progressiste
PT	Parti des Travailleurs
RA	Rassemblement pour l'Algérie
RCD	Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie
RNC	Rassemblement National Constitutionnel
RND	Rassemblement National Démocratique
RPR	Rassemblement Patriotique Republicain
RUN	Rassemblement pour l'Unité Nationale
UDL	Union pour la Démocratie et les Libertés

Chairman HYDE. Thank you very much, Dr. Layachi.
Dr. Ghadbian.

STATEMENT OF NAJIB GHADBIAN, PH.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS

Mr. GHADBIAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Committee. I will present a brief summary of my statement.

Democratic change in Syria seems possible again for the first time in many years. The Syrian opposition groups have begun to rebuild and reach out to each other on the basis of commitment to human rights and democratic processes. They have been encouraged by the example of the Lebanese people standing up to the Syrian military domination and by democratization measures moving forward elsewhere in the Arab World.

Bashar al-Asad's early days as President of Syria, were known as "the Damascus Spring." Syrian activists, for the first time in years, began political activities that seemed to be tolerated by the new regime. Six months after Bashar's succession, this "Spring" was nipped in the bud. Today, almost 5 years after the ascent of Bashar, his regime has failed to realize genuine reforms.

Three factors weigh against the prospects for political and economic reforms in Syria. These are: (1) the "old guard" of the regime; (2) Bashar's inability to lead and his ambivalence toward changes; and (3) the regime's strategy of deflecting the Syrian public's attention to the regional and international issue.

Despite the crackdown on the civil society movements, people in Syria have used every opening to press their demands, the end of authoritarian Bashar rule and the restoration of civil liberties to all Syrians.

The Syrian opposition is not a unified body, but reflects the diversity of Syrian society. It consists of liberal intellectuals, human rights activists, the religious right, Arab nationalists, Kurdish political parties, and other repressed political parties from far left to far right. These opposition elements have survived 40 years of repression. They have recently begun to rebuild from shattered conditions.

There are several positive features of the Syrian opposition. First, they have a degree of consensus about the main opposition goals. These include the five core demands: Lifting the emergency law in effect only since 1963; releasing political prisoners; allowing the free formation of political parties; amending the Constitution to end the Baath monopoly over power; and conducting free and fair elections.

Second, all Syrian opposition groups are resolved to effect change through peaceful and gradual means.

Third, the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria who make up an important segment of the opposition are moderate Islamists, and I think this is an important point to bring here, that the Distinguished Member Lantos mentioned, that, in fact, Islamists groups are of two types. The main street movements have accepted the democratic rule and are playing within the system. These are examples from Jordan, Morocco, Kuwait, and Yemen. And then there are

those on the fringe who in fact reject democracy, so this is an important distinction to make at this point.

So the Islamists of Syria have dropped extremist elements, endorsed the demand for democratic values, and expressed firm support for minority and women's rights.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members, the least dangerous democratic transition takes place when initiated from above. Asad's regime has not demonstrated any willingness to bring about such change, but continued internal demand, coupled with international pressure, might finally force the Syrian Government to initiate the required reform.

The regime has circulated rumors about far-reaching reforms soon to come out of the General Convention of the Baath Party, which is going to take place in June of this year. This might be the very last change for the Syrian regime to side with the people of Syria, and particular to Bashar who claims himself to be a reformer against the repressive and corrupt elements of the regime.

Anything short of genuine democratic change will be an invitation for the Syrian people to chart their own peaceful democratic course, to overthrow the regime, like the examples of Ukraine, Lebanon and others.

During these critical times, Mr. Chairman, the people of Syria need support from the international community. The forced withdrawal of the Syrian military and security forces from Lebanon is likely to isolate and weaken the Baath regime in Damascus. This will offer Syrian activists an opportunity to push for democratic change.

While I believe that democracy must be a homegrown product, the U.S., the EU and the international community can help people in their struggle for democracy.

Most Syrians would welcome support for democratic reform, but are cautious of the potentially high cost of change. It is hoped that the U.S. would support democratic reform by focusing on the following steps: First, the U.S. Congress should, in fact, join the Administration in sending a strong message that democracy is at the heart of change required of Asad's regime.

Second, the U.S. should press Syria on human rights. We have seen this body taking initiative on the Syrian Accountability Act, but we have not heard anything pressing Syria on human rights and democracy.

Third, the United States should support demands—that those who have committed atrocities against the Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian people be brought to justice, and these individuals have embezzled hundreds of millions of dollars and invested that in Western countries. These assets should be frozen and returned to a future democratic government in Syria.

Fourth, the Syrian Government should urge American companies in Syria not to court business with officials associated with repressive and corrupt security agencies.

Fifth, the United States should support the efforts of the Syrian opposition to create a broad-based coalition capable of forming a viable alternative to the Asad regime.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members, the people of Syria deserve better than this despotic regime. Syrians are mature enough

to rule themselves. Prior to the Baath domination, the Syrian people experienced periods of democracy. They have the cultural habits of democratic participation even if these are in cold storage at the moment. Democratic change in Syria is a long-term investment in the international war against terrorism. Democratic Syria will be a stabilizing factor in the region. It will improve their changes of democratic transition in Iraq and Lebanon, and it is an essential prerequisite for building a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Ghadbian follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NAJIB GHADBIAN, PH.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS

- The failure of the 'Damascus Spring, '2000–2001'
- Current prospects for reform
- Syrian opposition groups, domestic & external
- How might the US best promote reform and citizen participation?

Democratic change in Syria seems possible again for the first time in many years. Resilient home-grown opposition groups have begun to emerge from their weakened conditions to rebuild and reach out to each other on a basis of commitment to human rights and democratic processes. They have been encouraged by the example of the Lebanese people standing up to Syrian military domination and by democratization measures moving forward elsewhere in the Arab world. Ultimately, lasting and healthy systemic transition can only come from within. It is possible for these positive developments initiated by Syrians of long-term commitment to the improvement of Syria to be encouraged in their forward course by the international community, particularly the United States.

Bashar al-Asad's early days as President of Syria, which began in June 2000, were dubbed "the Damascus Spring." Syrians pressing for the expansion of civil society openly held meetings for the first time in years and began political activities that seemed to be tolerated by the new regime. Only six months after Bashar's succession, however, this "Spring" was nipped in the bud. The young Asad's relative youth, Western education, and potential as a reformer proved less relevant than the forces of the status quo ante. Today, almost five years after the ascent of Bashar, the Syrian regime has failed to realize genuine political and economic reforms.

Three factors have weighed against the prospects for political and economic reforms in Syria. These are 1) the 'old guard' of the regime, 2) Bashar's inability to lead and his ambivalence toward change, and 3) the regime's strategy of deflecting the Syrian public's attention to dire regional and international issues in order to evade the domestic issues and to avoid having to make any concessions to the rights of the Syrian people.

Despite the crackdown on what came to be known during the Damascus Spring as 'the Civil Society Movement' (or 'Mujtama' Madani') movement, and despite the imprisonment of ten of its leaders, people in the Syrian dissent both inside and outside Syria have managed to utilize every chink and opening to press for the major opposition demands: the end of authoritarian Baathist rule, and the restoration of civil liberties to all Syrians. The Syrian opposition is not a unified body, but clusters of groups reflecting the diverse nature of Syrian society. It consists of liberal intellectuals, human rights activists, artists, the religious right, Arab nationalists, Kurdish political parties, and repressed political parties from far left to far right, from communist to deeply conservative. These opposition elements have survived forty years of repression and exclusion under one-party rule. They have only recently begun to rebuild from shattered, weakened conditions.

There are several positive features of the Syrian opposition. First, opposition groups have succeeded in formulating a degree of consensus about the main opposition goals. These include the following five core demands:

- lifting the martial law that has been in effect since 1963
- releasing political prisoners, some languishing for decades
- allowing the free formation of political parties
- amending the constitution to end the Baath monopoly over power

- and conducting free and fair elections in which all political forces compete for people's votes.

A second positive factor about the Syrian opposition groups is that they all express the resolve to effect change in Syria through peaceful and gradual processes. A third point of information about the Syrian opposition which you should know is that the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria, who make up an important segment of the opposition, are moderate Islamists. They have dropped extremist elements among them, endorsed the demand for democratic rule, and expressed firm support for minority and women rights.

The Syrian regime alleges that the alternative to Asad's rule is either Islamic extremism or civil war and chaos. This is not true. Most Muslim Syrians are either moderate or secular. As for Islamists, there are two main components of the Islamic movement in Syria:

- The first is the various groups pursuing charitable and social work inside Syria, such as the followers of the son of the late Grand Mufti, Salah Koftaro.
- The second component of Islamists is the Muslim Brotherhood, long outlawed in Syria.

Neither group is extremist. Both have agreed to work within a democratic framework. The Muslim Brotherhood, in particular, has endorsed the concept of the modern democratic state as the best means to achieve the Islamic values of democratic consultation and social justice. In the state envisioned in their documents, all political forces compete through free and periodic elections.

The claim that chaos will result if the Asad regime is changed is likely to be true only for those in the elite who have exploited their power to enrich themselves illegally. Their habitual channels of self-enrichment will likely be in a state of upheaval should change happen.

There is a genuine fear among members of the Alawite minority in Syria who worry about a backlash against them because they are over-represented in the close circle of the Asad's regime. One of the sore points repeatedly raised about the regime, particularly by members of Syria's Sunni majority, is its clear sectarian bias in favor of the Alawite sect. The Alawite community needs to distance itself from the atrocities committed by members of the Asad regime. Both the Sunni and the Alawite communities need to engage in a process of national reconciliation to overcome the sectarian mistrust between the two groups. This process should include acknowledgement and apology for massacres and atrocities committed by the Alawite-dominated state security forces as well as assassinations and violent attacks committed by the Sunni extremist Islamists in its disastrous period of armed struggle against the Baathist regime from 1976 through the 1980s.

I believe the best guarantee against such a possibility is through creating a true democratic order in which all citizens are equal before the law. Members of the Sunni majority among the opposition ranks must continue to assure the Alawite community that democracy does not only mean majority rule, but also the protection of the rights of minorities and their inclusion and representation at all levels of government.

The least perilous democratic transition takes place when initiated from above. Asad's regime has not demonstrated any willingness to bring about such democratic change. But continued internal demand coupled with international pressure might finally force some members of the Syrian regime to initiate the required reforms. The regime has circulated rumors about far-reaching reforms soon to come out of the General Convention of the Baath party, which is going to take place in June of this year. This might be the very last chance for Bashar to side with the people of Syria against the repressive and corrupt elements of his regime.

Steps that would indicate serious political reform must include lifting martial law, amending the constitution to allow for political pluralism and the unrestricted formation of political parties, and calling for free and fair elections, to be monitored by international observers. Anything short of that is an invitation for the Syrian people to take matters into their hands and chart their own peaceful democratic course to overthrow this regime.

During these critical times, Mr. Chairman, the people of Syria need support from the international community. The Syrian regime's meddling in Lebanese affairs and the recent assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, have led many in the international community to reconsider their position toward this despotic regime. The forced withdrawal of the Syrian military and security forces from Lebanon is likely to isolate and weaken the Baathist regime. This will offer democracy advocates, at home and abroad, an opportunity to push for democratic change.

While I believe that democracy must be a homegrown product, the US, the EU, and the international community can help people in their struggle for democracy. Most Syrians, inside and outside Syria, want change and would welcome support for democratic reform, but are cautious of the potentially high cost of change. Intensifying the suffering of the Syrian people is not the path to change they would support.

It is hoped that the US would support democratic reform by focusing on the following steps:

- First, the US Congress should send a strong message that democracy is at the heart of the change required of Asad's regime.
- Second, the US should press the Syrian government on human rights. The latest report by the Association of Syrian Human Rights shows that there are still about 2,000 political prisoners in Syria. The Syrian government must disclose information about more than 15,000 "missing" individuals; most of them are believed to be executed while in detention between 1980 and 1995. Exiled Syrians should regain the right to get travel documents and go back home unharmed.
- Third, the US should support the demands of most Syrians that the heads of security and members of the regimes who committed atrocities against the Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian people be tried for these crimes. Many heads of security and military agencies and their relatives have embezzled millions of dollars from the country and invested the stolen wealth in Western countries. These assets should be frozen and returned to the future Syrian democratic government.
- Fourth, the US government should urge American companies doing business in Syria to disallow any dealings with individuals associated with the repressive and corrupt heads of the security agencies.
- Fifth, the US should support the undergoing efforts by the Syrian opposition to create a broad-based coalition capable of forming a viable alternative to the Asad regime. Emphasis should be placed on home-grown oppositions having a demonstrated record of integrity (which in Syria is measured by years in prison or exile).

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members:

The people of Syria deserve better than this despotic and corrupt regime. Syrians are mature enough to rule themselves. Prior to the Baath domination, the Syrian people experienced periods of democracy. They have the cultural habits of democratic participation, even if these are in cold storage at the moment.

Democratic change in Syria is a long-term investment in the international war against terrorism. Democratic Syria will be a stabilizing factor for the whole region. It will improve the chances of democratic transition in Iraq and Lebanon, and it is an essential prerequisite for building a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Committee Members.

Chairman HYDE. Thank you, Dr. Ghadbian.
Dr. Hamzawy.

**STATEMENT OF AMR HAMZAWY, PH.D., SENIOR ASSOCIATE,
CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE,
WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. HAMZAWY. Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members, thank you very much for inviting me to testify before the Committee. Allow me to highlight three key issues based on my testimony about challenges and prospects of democratization, each of which I submitted to the Committee. These are: Government reform policies, composition for position movements, and strategies to promote democracy in Egypt.

Contemporary political developments in Egypt shed light on two major dilemmas: (1) the uncertain path of the government in initiating needed democratic reforms; and (2) the structural weakness of opposition parties and movements.

Throughout the last 3 years, the ruling National Democratic Party has articulated different reform initiatives, tackling the crucial issues of citizen participation and political rights. Although the party's draft laws on exercising political rights, reforming the system of local administration, and certainly the establishment of the National Council for Human Rights represent attempts to open up the political system, they stop short of creating a momentum for democratization in Egypt.

President Mubarak's recent decision to amend Law No. 76 of the Constitution to allow more than one candidate to run in the upcoming Presidential election next fall is a significant reform step. However, there is a real danger that it will be robbed of meaning if it is not followed by other substantial reforms.

The Egyptian Government has so far ignored the right consensus that exists outside its own constituency, concerning the three reform imperatives needed to render Egypt's democratic transformation as a realistic project: (1) setting limits on the terms of office as well as the powers vested in the President as head of the executive; (2) rescinding the state of emergency which was extended 2 years ago for 3 years from the People's Assembly; and (3) changing the laws obstructing the establishment and functioning of political parties and NGOs.

The second major dilemma of Egypt's democratic transformation is the absence of viable opposition movements with broad constituencies. The four major opposition parties—Al Wafd, Unionist, Arab Nasserist, and Al Ghad Parties—are structurally weak and lack constituencies large enough to mobilize popular support. Ten other small parties are active, but their numbers and basic relevance is inconsequential.

Civil society actors, NGOs, and counter-state restrictions are partially marginal from the social fabric. The legal framework governing the functioning of NGOs in Egypt is governed by Law No. 84 of 2002, which requires civic associations to register with the Ministry of Social Affairs, and in this way opens up the gates of political manipulation.

Nonviolent Islamist movements—and here I support very much what my colleague, Dr. Ghabbian, mentioned in terms of distinguishing between violent Islamic movements and nonviolent Islamic movements, and here I will be talking about nonviolent Islamic movements in Egypt—these movements, mainly the Muslim Brotherhood, are well rooted in the Egyptian social and cultural fabric and possess, therefore, a great potential for forging broad alliances for political transformation. The mainstream has been moving toward more pragmatism based on prioritizing reforms as the only viable strategy to promote democracy. Embracing the notion of democratic polity with the nonviolent Islamist movements, however, does not mean that they are giving up their religious legacy, although they are becoming wholeheartedly new liberals of Egypt. Rather, they will always sustain their traditional agenda built around goals to implement the Islamic law, but the crucial issue at stake here is that calling for democratic reform is becoming a central component of the nonviolent Islamists' agenda as well, if not its determining principle.

The realization of the new moderate Islamists' vision requires a degree of openness on the part of the Egyptian Government toward integration of the political process. Unfortunately, no steps have been taken in that direction in the last 3 years.

Throughout the last 3 years, different secular parties and movements have been reaching out to mainstream Islamists and engaging them in campaigns calling for political reform. The Egyptian Movement for Change, Kifaya, stands for this emerging religious, secular, national alliance for democracy. These are significant steps and go in the right direction, and they have a great potential since democratic opposition platforms are by far, in the Egyptian case, more effective with Islamist participation than without it.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members, Egypt's path to democracy is uncertain. The government's reform policies in the last 3 years have gone in the right direction, but they stop short of introducing a package of substantial change into the restrictive patterns of political participation prevailing in the country.

Apparently the only way to end the current stalemate is to mobilize large constituencies for political reform within the Egyptian society itself. Opposition parties and civil society actors, however, face restrictions and suffer from structural deficiencies.

The United States can help promote reform by, one, encouraging the government to move ahead in opening up the political system and easing its restrictions against the opposition. To this end, the United States should use its own economic and political ties with Egypt without, however, alienating the government by threatening pressures or threatening to cut down military and economic assistance.

Managing the reform costs in Egypt, primarily the first stages, remains a prerogative of the existing regime, and without its backing the whole process cannot take off.

A second viable strategy is to promote the cause of emerging democratic platforms and engage nonviolent Islamists. The United States needs to deepen its current openness toward Islamist movements across the region and in Egypt by gradually including them in democracy promotion programs. Without their active participation, calls for reform in Egypt are bound to remain the whisper of closed communities irrelevant to the social fabric at large.

Mr. Chairman, the Egyptian Government has long secured the support or at least the silent approval of the United States for its repressive measures toward Islamist movements by evoking the so-called Algerian Syndrome, or the nightmare of anti-Western fanatics coming to power through the ballot box, one man, one time, one vote.

Arab politics has changed a great deal in the last 15 years, Egyptian politics as well. At present, excluding Islamists from the political sphere weakens the chances of democratic transformation in Egypt more than anything else. The cause of democracy is best served in Egypt by bringing in nonviolent democratic Islamists and their large constituencies.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members, thank you for your attention.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hamzawy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMR HAMZAWY, PH.D., SENIOR ASSOCIATE, CARNEGIE
ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, WASHINGTON, DC

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION IN EGYPT

The Arab world is changing. Confronted with increasingly disenchanted domestic populations and Western efforts to promote democracy in the region, a representative number of Arab governments has embarked on the road to political reforms or has accelerated the pace of their realization. Changing regional conditions in the three years have helped to create an unprecedented momentum for debating the perspectives of democratic transformation from Morocco to Bahrain. Never before has Arab public interest in political participation, peaceful transfer of power, and good governance been as genuine and far-reaching.

Yet, the path to Arab democracy continues to be problematic. A close look at the contemporary regional political scene reveals that the predominantly missing element—when compared with more successful experiences of political transformation elsewhere (e.g., Eastern Europe and South America)—is the emergence of democratic opposition movements with broad constituencies that can contest authoritarian power and force concessions. International efforts to promote democracy in societies where the tradeoffs of undemocratic governance continue to be bearable for the ruling elites do not suffice to make political reforms plausible or viable.

Government Reform Policies

Contemporary political developments in Egypt confirm these doubts. They shed light on two major dilemmas of Egyptian politics: the tortuous path of the government in initiating needed democratic reforms and the structural weakness of opposition parties and movements. Since 2002, Egypt's ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) has embarked on an effort to project a new, reformist image. Rising domestic demands for political accountability, deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, and popular dissatisfaction with the performance of NDP-led governments have forced the party to reconsider its public profile. A greater inclination on the part of the United States and the European Union to pressure Egypt on political reform has also played a role. In the past three years, a cadre of younger technocrats—mainly mid-career professionals, businessmen, and university professors—has been injected into a party long dominated by older figures. This “young guard,” well versed in the rhetoric of democracy and good governance, has developed the NDP's current platform of political reforms. The NDP has also revamped its internal structure by introducing primaries for leadership posts, creating specialized policy committees, and convening an annual congress.

Throughout the last three years the NDP has articulated different reform initiatives tackling the crucial issues of citizen participation and their political rights. Although NDP draft laws on “Exercising Political Rights” (Law No. 73 of 1956) and “Political Parties” (Law No. 40 of 1977) represent attempts to open up the political system, they stop short of creating momentum for democratization in Egypt. President Hosni Mubarak's recent decision to amend article 76 of the constitution to allow more than one candidate to run in the upcoming presidential election next fall certainly represents a significant reform step, but there is real danger that it will be robbed of all meaning if it is not followed by other substantial reforms or in case of a practice based on the model used in Tunisia, where President Ben Ali carefully staged the inevitable extension of his period in office along pluralist lines.

The Egyptian government has ignored the wide consensus that exists outside its own constituency concerning the three reform imperatives needed to render Egypt's democratic transformation a realistic project: (1) setting limits on the terms of office as well as the powers vested in the president as head of the executive, (2) rescinding the State of Emergency, which was extended by the People's Assembly on February 23, 2003, for three more years, and (3) changing the laws obstructing the functioning of professional associations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The State of Emergency limits the ability of political and civic groups to associate and assemble freely. Political parties, when legalized, are highly restricted in their activities. The Emergency Law prohibits parties from organizing public meetings without prior permission from the Ministry of Interior. Security forces have unrestrained powers to arrest and detain individuals, a practice particularly common in the case of Islamist groups whose members are normally arrested prior to parliamentary and local elections. The legal framework for NGOs in Egypt is governed by Law No. 84 of 2002, which requires civic associations to register with the Ministry of Social Affairs and opens the possibility of political manipulation by granting the Ministry the right to disband by administrative decree any association deemed to be performing illegal activities. Furthermore, the law prohibits NGOs from taking part in political or syndicate activities and receiving crucial foreign funding in the absence of gov-

ernmental approval. In all these areas, no traces of substantial transformation can be discerned since 2002.

Almost three decades ago Egypt appeared to embark on the road to democracy. Since then the government has favored a more gradual transformation to a limited political pluralism. The major legitimizing strategy for the government's go-slow approach has been twofold: (1) systematically evoke the well-worn mantra that economic reforms must come before political reform, and (2) consistently maintain that the population needs to be prepared for democracy before reforms can take place. But, the "democratization in spurts" model has led to no more than minor reforms on the fringes of the political sphere. The system of power relationships and constitutional and legal arrangements organizing political participation remains essentially unchanged.

Opposition Movements

The second major dilemma of Egypt's democratic transformation is the absence of democratic opposition movements with broad constituencies. Although the party system is fundamentally established and shows a moderate degree of fragmentation, the NDP dominates it with its strong hold over the legislative and the executive branches. The four major opposition parties—the liberal Al Wafd Party, the leftist National Progressive Unionist Party, the Arab Nasserist Party, and the Al Ghad Party—are structurally weak and lack constituencies large enough to mobilize popular support. Ten other small parties are active, but their numbers and political relevance are inconsequential.

In contrast, there are approximately 16,000 registered civic associations. Even by regional standards, however, the diversified topography of vital social interests is still underrepresented; the poor, the weak, the marginalized, and the rural constituencies are excluded from the system. In the 1950s and 1960s the state functioned as the major representative of these groups, but since the Open Door Policy began in 1976, the state has been retreating from various social spheres with no viable substitutes to fill the vacuum. Representation of interests has become a monopoly of powerful political and economic elites—a dangerous situation considering that the exclusion of large segments of the Egyptian population has always resulted in social unrest, radical currents, and political apathy. Civil society groups encounter both state restrictions and popular distrust. Through an efficient conglomerate of legal and political measures, the state controls the scope and content of activities performed by civic organizations. They tend to remain centered in urban areas and oriented toward the middle class.

By contrast, nonviolent Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood are well rooted in the Egyptian social and cultural fabric and possess great potential for forging broad alliances for political transformation. In the 1980s and 1990s the Muslim Brothers had yet to come up with a strategic commitment to democratic forms of governance. Caught in the iron grip of state oppression and continuous radicalization at the outer edges of the Islamist spectrum, they were forced out of the official political sphere. Their preoccupation with rhetorically sound, though politically unattainable, issues—such as the implementation of the Islamic Law and the Islamization of educational systems—did not help them overcome general doubts about their real objectives. Rather, it lent credibility to the negative perception of Islamists as traditionalist forces who are less interested in tolerating the diversity of Egyptian society or accommodating political pluralism in any serious way. By the end of the 1990s, despite considerable popular support, the apparent failure of Islamists to change political realities in Egypt gave birth to various revisionist trends among nonviolent movements and unleashed a critical discussion on their priorities and strategies that gathered momentum in the aftermath of September 11, 2001.

The major outcome has been a shift in mainstream Egyptian Islamist movements toward more pragmatism based on prioritizing gradual democratic reforms as the path to follow for their political integration and as the only viable strategy to challenge a persistently authoritarian system. Embracing the notion of democratic polity within nonviolent Islamist movements, however, does not mean that they are giving up their religious legacy and becoming wholeheartedly the new liberals of Egypt. Rather, they will always sustain their distinct religious identity as compared to other political forces by stressing, at least rhetorically, a traditional agenda built around moral calls to implement the Islamic Law and Islamize the public sphere and propagandistic pleas to liberate Palestine and the Muslim homelands from the "infidels." The crucial issue at stake is the fact that calling for democratic reform is becoming a central component of the Islamist agenda as well, if not its determining principle, one which transcends all others.

The realization of the new Islamist vision requires a degree of openness on the part of the Egyptian government toward the integration of nonviolent movements in the political sphere. Unfortunately, no steps have been taken in that direction. The Muslim Brotherhood remains excluded from the political sphere and faces at virtually regular intervals the repressive measures of the government. Islamist-led initiatives to establish political parties (e.g., al-Wasat initiative) are normally blocked by the government-controlled Political Parties Affairs Committee. Despite their continued containment and exclusion in the last few years, democratic Islamists have upheld their strategic choice for gradual political reforms.

Throughout the last three years, different secular parties have been gradually reaching out to mainstream Islamists and engaging them in campaigns calling for reforms. Islamists, for their part, have seized the integration opportunity and positioned themselves at the heart of the growing popular opposition. The Egyptian Movement for Change, Kifaya (Enough), stands for this emerging secular-religious national alliance for democracy. These are significant initial steps. Democratic opposition platforms are by far more effective with Islamist participation than without it.

Promoting Political Reform in Egypt

Egypt's path to democracy is uncertain. The government's reform policies in the last three years have gone in the right direction, but they stop short of introducing a package of substantial changes into the political power structure and the restrictive patterns of political participation prevailing in the country. Apparently, the only way to end the current stalemate is to mobilize large constituencies for political reform. Opposition parties and civil society actors, however, face restrictions imposed by the government and suffer from various structural deficiencies. Nonviolent Islamists have the potential to reach out to considerable constituencies, but they are suppressed by the government's security forces and have rather limited room for maneuver.

Egypt is so geostrategically important that it can neither be ignored nor subjected to pressures. The United States can help promote reform by encouraging the government to move ahead in opening up the political system and easing its restrictions against the opposition, especially nonviolent Islamist movements. To this end, the United States should use its strong economic and political ties with Egypt, without alienating the government by threatening to cut down military and economic assistance. Managing the reform process, primarily in its first stages, remains the prerogative of the existing regime and without its backing the whole process cannot take off.

A second viable strategy is to promote the cause of emerging democratic platforms and engage nonviolent Islamists. The United States needs to deepen its current openness toward Islamist movements by gradually including them in democracy promotion programs. Without their active participation, calls for reform in Egypt are bound to remain the whisper of closed communities irrelevant to the social fabric at large. In a first phase of collaboration it might be easier for both the United States and Islamist movements to set aside the explosive terrains of national and regional politics and adopt a low-profile approach. Different joint projects designed to promote mutual trust and moderation within the Islamist spectrum can be envisaged for example in the fields of civic education, empowerment of women, and local capacity building. Identifying potential Islamist partners should follow a minimalist, more pragmatic and less normative, approach. The respective movement or organization becomes eligible, provided that it clearly and generally renounces violence and is willing to collaborate with the West. The Egyptian government has long secured the support or at least the silent approval of the United States for its repressive measures toward Islamist movements by evoking the so-called Algerian syndrome or the nightmare of anti-Western fanatics coming to power through the ballot box. However, at present excluding Islamists from the political sphere weakens the chances of democratic transformation in Egypt more than anything else. The cause of democracy is best served by bringing in nonviolent Islamists and their large constituencies.

Chairman HYDE. Thank you, Dr. Hamzawy.
And now Ms. Hawthorne.

STATEMENT OF MS. AMY HAWTHORNE, MIDDLE EAST DEMOCRACY ANALYST AND FORMER FOUNDING EDITOR OF CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT'S "ARAB REFORM BULLETIN," WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. HAWTHORNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee for inviting me to testify today, and I congratulate you on convening this hearing on the very important issue of reform in democracy in the Arab World.

As someone who worked on this issue for nearly a decade as an analyst and a practitioner of democracy promotion programs in the Middle East, I welcome the opportunity to share some thoughts with you about how U.S. policy can be most effective in this regard.

With your permission, I will summarize the key points in my written statement, and I will be happy to take questions on specific issues later on.

The new United States emphasis on promoting democracy in the Arab World is welcome and long overdue. Yet nearly 4 years after the attacks of September 11, 2001, that originally focused United States attention on the democracy deficit in the Middle East, United States policy is still a work in progress.

Despite President Bush's bold declarations that democratic change in the Middle East is now a United States priority, the United States has yet to integrate democracy promotion into its relationships with individual Arab States, to grapple fully with difficult policy issues, or to devise effective democracy promotion programs. U.S. policy is still marked by a deep hesitancy about the risks associated with the more assertive democracy promotion stance.

In fact, the risks are real. Pursuing a robust democracy promotion policy may well bring tension into our relationships with Arab regimes on whom we still rely to pursue our regional interests. It means accepting the possibility that political openings may initially benefit forces who are not friendly to the United States. It means reaching out to a much wider range of actors in Arab societies than whom the United States has traditionally interacted. It also means accepting the limits of the U.S. influence.

We know from democratic transitions around the world that internal conditions are the most important factors in successful democratization processes, and the internal conditions across the Arab World are not that favorable.

Nonetheless, the United States does possess significant influence in the region, and we should wield it whenever possible, not to impose our choices, but to create opportunities for Arabs to decide how they want to move toward more open, just, and participatory political systems; in short, toward democracy.

To devise an effective U.S. policy, the U.S. must be clear about its goals, understand regional realities, and use its available policy tools wisely.

In terms of goals, the overarching U.S. policy goals should be to promote democratic change, not simply political reform or political liberalization. Political liberalization, in brief, are reforms that open up some political space, but do not fundamentally change the rules of the game, who can rule, and how, and these are basically the reforms that have already been carried out by Arab Govern-

ments, and they do not really create any pathway for Arab countries to get out of—to break out of the current political mold or political stagnancy that they are now in.

The U.S. should press for deeper changes that expand political competition, empower institutions, such as Parliaments that represent citizen interests, improve human rights conditions, and make governance more transparent and accountable. Such changes can, over time, create a pathway in which alternatives to ruling regimes can organize and compete for power peacefully, and in which democratic institutions can be established. These developments would truly represent a breakthrough in the Middle East.

In terms of regional realities, there are several of which the United States needs to take account. The first is that while the current reform ferment in the region is genuine, it is also fragile, uneven across the region, and just one aspect of a very complex regional and political landscape.

Ruling regimes and others determined to preserve the status quo remain extremely strong. Forces pushing for democratic change are weak. All this points to the need for the United States to avoid declaring a premature victory for the Arab democratic spring, and to acknowledge and plan for the huge challenges that lie ahead.

Second, in promoting democratic reform, the U.S. needs to be able to work both with civil society organizations and other non-governmental groups as well as with Arab Governments.

Third, across the Arab World, Islamist opposition groups are major political and social forces with significant popular support. While the main focus of U.S. democracy promotion efforts should be to bolster political forces that could pose alternatives to both Islamist groups and incumbent regimes, the U.S. should nonetheless begin to engage in a dialogue with Islamist groups that reject violence and agree to abide by democratic rules of the game.

Such a dialogue will not be easy, and it does not imply United States support for these groups per se, but it is very important in terms of better understanding these crucial forces in Arab societies, understanding what moderate forces exist within them, and how those moderate forces might become ascendent.

Finally, in terms of regional dynamics, each Arab country has its own conditions, opportunities, and challenges. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to democracy promotion in the Middle East. United States strategies must be country-specific, grounded in local realities, and responsive to local priorities.

In terms of tools, the main tools available to the United States to promote democracy in the Arab World are diplomatic engagement and democracy aid, and the Bush Administration must use both. None on its own will be sufficient.

In terms of diplomatic engagement, the Bush Administration's highest profile initiative so far is the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA). While this initiative has some potentially valuable aspects, on the whole I do not see it as being a particularly useful tool to promote democratic political change, and I would be happy to go into detail about why this is the case. But the main reasons are two: It does not contain any incentives to Arab regimes for participation; and being a regional initiative that includes so many diverse countries, it runs the risk of creating

goals and commitments that are so watered down as to become meaningless on the regional level, and this is exactly what Arab Governments would like to see. They want to avoid being held to specific commitments that have to do with their own countries. They would rather sign onto very general statements about democracy and governance that they will not be held to. So the BMENA, in my view, runs the risk of becoming, really, a talk shop without much teeth.

I think a much more promising investment of U.S. resources and political capital is at the bilateral level, and the United States has started to do this, but it needs to really institutionalize policy dialogues on political reform with individual Arab Governments that cover key issues related to democratic reform in each country.

The U.S. Embassy officials should also meet regularly with a wide range of nongovernmental organizations, political parties, and other groups to signal that Arab Governments are not the United States' only interlocutor on reform. In addition, reform topics should be on the talking points of every high-level meeting between United States and Arab officials both in Washington and the region.

Now, because Arab Governments are not going to implement reforms just because the United States is having a dialogue with them, the United States needs to be prepared to supplement its dialogue with diplomatic sticks and carrots. These could include such measures as postponing or cancelling important visits, slowing the dispersal of economic or even military aid, and withholding action on economic and trade issues that are important to Arab Governments.

The United States should also consider the option of conditioning economic and military aid on reform, on political reform, but it should recognize that such conditionality is often less effective than is imagined, and I would be happy to talk more about that later.

Public rhetoric is also an essential part of U.S. policy. Going forward, more important than President Bush's exhortations about the need for freedom and democracy in the region are regular statements by senior U.S. officials—including the President himself, when appropriate—about specific issues in specific countries. These are much harder for Arab governments to ignore and resonate much more with the public in those countries.

Now, would engaging or even pressuring Arab Governments in this way jeopardize key United States interests in the region? It is very hard to predict because we have never been down this path before in the Middle East.

I think at a minimum we can assume that these measures, this policy would introduce tension into our relationship with Arab Governments, whether those to whom we are quite close such as Jordan, and those with whom we have less close relationships, such as Syria, and those tensions will complicate the pursuance of United States policy. But I do believe that on key issues where the United States has shared common interests with Arab Governments, such as in some cases Arab-Israeli peace, counterterrorism, and economic issues, Arab Governments will still cooperate with the United States if they see that it is in their interest to do so.

In terms of democracy aid, we know that the United States' flagship aid program, democracy aid program, is the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). So far this is a promising concept, MEPI, but it has struggled to achieve full effectiveness. For a number of reasons, it is very hindered in its ability to be a credible and effective reform mechanism in its current state, and my recommendation to the Committee is that the bulk of the MEPI funds go into the creation of a private foundation that would be supported by U.S. funds but would be privately run.

Some funds, of course, should be reserved for the use of the Administration itself in promoting reform, but I think that upon careful consideration my recommendation is that MEPI will be more effective if it is primarily transformed into a private foundation.

Finally, I would like to note that in addition to the measures taken by the Executive Branch that I have listed, Congress also has a very important role to play in promoting political reform in the Middle East, and in some ways it has already taken on this role, but I think it can do more. Congress can hold hearings such as this on democratic reform. It can issue statements in support of Arab dissidents and reformers. It can raise political reform issues regularly during meetings and visits with Arab Governments, and where necessary, it can push the Administration on difficult reform issues that it would prefer to avoid.

And finally, expanding U.S. Government and private sector programs in educational exchange, scholarships, and dialogue between the United States and the Arab World is also important because it helps to weave networks of personal ties and shared interests that are crucial to advancing the cause of democracy in the Middle East.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Hawthorne follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MS. AMY HAWTHORNE, MIDDLE EAST DEMOCRACY ANALYST AND FORMER FOUNDING EDITOR OF CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT'S "ARAB REFORM BULLETIN," WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for inviting me to testify today. I congratulate you on convening this hearing on the important issue of reform and democracy in the Arab world. As someone who has been closely involved with Middle East democracy promotion for nearly a decade as both an analyst and a practitioner of democracy aid programs, I appreciate the opportunity to share with you my thoughts on how the United States most effectively can promote democratic change in Arab countries. I cannot do justice to this complex policy issue in this brief statement. With your permission, I will address the key points associated with crafting and implementing a credible and viable democracy promotion policy in the region. My remarks will not address the question of democracy-building in Iraq or the Palestinian territories, which in many respects are separate policy challenges.

The new U.S. emphasis on promoting democratic reform in the Arab world is welcome and long overdue. Yet, some three and a half years after the September 11, 2001 attacks that fixated U.S. attention on the Middle East democracy deficit, U.S. democracy promotion policy is still very much a work in progress. Despite the bold declarations of President Bush and senior administration officials that democratic change in the Arab world is now a top U.S. priority, the United States has yet to integrate democracy promotion into its bilateral relations with Arab countries, to grapple fully with difficult policy issues, or to devise effective democracy assistance programs. U.S. policy is still marked by a deep hesitancy about the risks associated with a more assertive democracy promotion policy.

In fact, the risks are real, and cannot be wished away. Pursuing a robust democracy promotion policy will mean clashing with incumbent Arab regimes, bringing tension to relationships on which the United States still relies to advance its inter-

ests in the region. It means accepting the possibility that political openings may bring instability and may benefit forces that are not friendly to U.S. interests. It means reaching out to a much wider range of actors in Arab societies than the United States is accustomed to engaging. It means hard work on the ground and the commitment of significant resources over a period of many years, without any guarantee of immediate pay-offs to the United States. It also means accepting the limits of U.S. influence. As our experience in Iraq to date demonstrates, simply because the United States has now decided that democratic change in the region is in our national interest does not mean that Arab countries will magically transform themselves in response. We know from democratic transitions around the world that internal conditions are the most important factors in successful democratization, and the internal conditions in the Arab world are not particularly favorable.

Nonetheless, the United States possesses significant influence in the region, and we should wield it, whenever possible, not to impose our choices but to help create opportunities in which Arabs can decide how to move toward more open, participatory, just, and effective governance—in short, toward democracy. Such a transition is in the long-term interest of the United States and Arab countries. Many Arabs themselves want change, popular dissatisfaction with the status quo is only growing and it is difficult to imagine how the current political systems would be able to address successfully the region's complex political, economic, and security challenges. To formulate and implement an effective promotion policy, the United States must strike a balance between reckless action and paralyzing caution and between careful strategy and flexible opportunism. Given the challenges and newness of the terrain for the United States, much of the effort will be trial and error. At a minimum, however, the United States must be clear about its policy goals, must understand regional realities, and must use its available policy tools wisely.

POLICY GOALS

The overarching long-term U.S. policy goal should be to promote democratic change in Arab countries, rather than simply political reform or liberalization. This is a strategic, not just a semantic, distinction. Political liberalization essentially refers to a process in which non-democratic governments loosen some controls on political activity, such as by holding controlled elections for institutions without much power, permitting limited civic activism, or allowing greater debate in the media, without loosening their grip on power and without creating a pathway toward democratization—in short, without changing who rules and how. To one degree or another, most Arab governments have been carrying out such reforms since the 1980s and 1990s. Such political liberalization has helped foster greater pluralism in Arab countries and has served as a safety valve for some popular discontent. But the process has not fundamentally altered the political environment in any Arab country. Thus the United States should not endorse such reforms as sufficient and should instead press for deeper and broader changes that expand political competition and extend the boundaries of peaceful political activity and debate, that empower institutions, such as parliaments, that represent citizen interests and that can help to check the power of the executive, that significantly improve human rights conditions, and that make governance more transparent and accountable. Such changes can, over time, create a pathway in which alternatives to ruling regimes can organize and compete for power through democratic elections, and in which democratic institutions of governance can be established—developments that truly would signal a democratic breakthrough in the Middle East.

Such a policy goal does not imply that every Arab country is destined to evolve into a Western-style democracy, Saudi Arabia being the leading such example. But it does suggest that a more democratic future is possible for the numerous Arab republics and monarchies that have in place many of the trappings, but not yet the substance, of democratic systems. A policy that adopts the reform existing systems as its long-term objective effectively endorses the status quo and sends the message that Arabs should never aspire to build new, more democratic orders. Nor does a policy goal of democratic change mean that the United States should suddenly pull out all the stops and recklessly push for abrupt political openings; such an approach would be likely to end in failure. Rather, the task ahead of the United States is to push wisely for incremental but real democratic change.

REGIONAL REALITIES

The United States must approach the task of democracy promotion with a clear understanding of often sobering regional realities.

—First, while the current reform ferment in the region is genuine, it is also fragile, uneven across the Arab world, and only one aspect of a complex regional polit-

ical landscape. Contrary to analysis popular in Washington these days, the current ferment did not suddenly originate with the Iraqi elections in January or even with the Bush administration's heightened attention to Middle East democracy since the attacks of September 11, 2001. Rather, it is an intensification of a liberalizing trend that has been ebbing and flowing in the region since the 1980s. Earlier waves of reform have been incomplete and reversible. To be sure, important new factors in the region—including the potential demonstration effect of Iraq, the spread of new technologies including pan-Arab media and the Internet, greater external support for democratic change—may make the current reform wave more promising. Yet, ruling regimes and others determined to preserve the status quo remain extremely strong. Forces pushing for reform are still weak, lacking in mass support, and easily fragmented and co-opted by regimes. Reformers in many countries increasingly agree on the desirability of political change, but differ on how it should come about as well as on key issues of economic and social policy. Across the region, important constituencies such as labor and business have yet to weigh in on the side of democratic change. Some countries, such as Algeria, Tunisia, and Yemen, have so far been touched only lightly by the ferment. All this points to the need for the United States to avoid declaring a premature victory for a so-called 'Arab democratic spring' and predicting the region's inevitable smooth glide toward democracy, and to acknowledge and plan for the huge challenges that lie ahead.

—Second, in promoting reform the United States must be prepared to work with civil society and other non-governmental forces pushing for change as well as with Arab governments. Pro-reform civil society movements are still too weak to be decisive on their own, and large segments of Arab publics are still too suspicious of U.S. democracy promotion activities to be the leading partner of the United States. Nonetheless, the United States must expand its circle of civil society interlocutors beyond the narrow group of Westernized non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with which it typically deals to include groups with broader local support such as professional associations, political parties, labor unions, and religious institutions. At least until the current circumstances change, Arab governments should be the main focus of U.S. democracy promotion efforts, mainly as targets of U.S. pressure for meaningful reform but also, if promising governmental reform initiatives emerge, as partners.

—Third, democratic change in Arab countries is not necessarily an immediate antidote for Islamist radicalism and terrorism. To be sure, democratic openings in the region would amplify the voices of those who oppose extremism and violence and advocate liberal values, tolerance, human rights, and moderation in religion. But such openings will probably not, in the short and medium-run, compel the followers of Al Qaeda and similar groups to abandon their cultish cause. Those drawn to Islamist radicalism are of such diverse national origin and socio-economic, educational and personal backgrounds that we must assume that they are motivated by reasons that include not only resentment over political repression and exclusion but distorted religious beliefs, thwarted ambition, social alienation, and anger over Muslim countries' weakness vis a vis the West. The creation of more open, democratic systems will not, in and of itself, necessarily address these deeper grievances. In addition, as we have seen in Iraq, democratizing countries are often unstable and weakly governed after longstanding security controls dissolve and before a new order takes hold, creating conditions in which violent, radical groups can gain a foothold.

—Fourth, across the Arab world, Islamist opposition groups are major political and social forces with significant popular support. While the main focus of U.S. democracy promotion efforts should be to bolster political forces that could pose alternatives to both Islamist groups and incumbent regimes, the United States cannot afford to ignore or try to wish away the presence of Islamists in Arab politics. Instead, over the likely objections of many Arab governments, U.S. officials should begin to engage in regular dialogue with such groups, including those that are already operating in the political sphere openly and legally, such as Jordan's Islamic Action Front or Yemen's Islah Party, and those that remain illegal but whose political participation is sometimes tolerated within strict limits, such as Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Such a U.S. policy stance should not include providing support to Islamist groups, most of which would shun such aid anyway, or endorsing their positions. Rather, the purposes would be to learn more about these groups, all of which include a mix of hard-liners and more moderate members who are endorsing democratic reform and seeking to build coalitions with non-Islamist opposition groups; to identify and build ties to these still-weak moderate forces; to better understand what U.S. policies would contribute to the ascendancy of such forces; and to signal that the United States is willing to accept election victories by Islamists who reject violence and accept democratic rules of the game.

Admittedly, engaging in such dialogue is not an appealing prospect: Islamist groups typically are hostile to U.S. policies in the region and deeply suspicious of U.S. motives in the Middle East, maintain very conservative, even illiberal, attitudes toward the rights of women and religious minorities, and hold vague positions on key elements of democracy such as the rotation of power and the rule of law. It is also risky. There is no guarantee that if Islamist groups gain power through elections they will abide by democratic rules and permit themselves to be voted out of office. Furthermore, dialogue with the United States is hardly going to be the determining factor in the ascendancy or marginalization of moderate Islamist forces: local socio-economic conditions, conflicts in Iraq and the Palestinian territories, and pressures in war on terrorism are all much more decisive influences. However, given the importance of Islamist groups in Arab politics and the importance of mainstream Islamist movements' evolution into moderate actors that operate above ground, reject violence and play by democratic rules, the United States cannot afford not to engage with them even in a limited way. Furthermore, a U.S. policy that excludes them or that countenances their repression by Arab governments contributes to the widespread perception in the region that the United States is "anti-Muslim." Notably, the fact that the United States has just served as midwife to democratic elections in Iraq that produced a victory by Shiite Islamist candidates and an Islamist prime minister, Ibrahim Jaafari, means that the Bush administration will find it difficult to avoid facing the issue of Islamist participation in governance elsewhere in the region.

—Fourth, resentment and even hostility are likely to dominate Arab reactions to U.S. democracy promotion efforts for some time to come, complicating efforts to build partnerships with reformers and frustrating those who expect U.S. democracy promotion to generate much pro-American sentiment. Many reformers are reluctant to accept U.S. funding or otherwise to affiliate with the United States government. Some are skeptical that the United States is serious about pushing for democratic change, given its long history of support for autocrats and its countervailing interests. Others are suspicious of the U.S. government due to the unpopularity of its policies in the region and to fears that Western "democracy promotion" is a guise to weaken Islam and to Westernize Arab culture. Authoritarian governments eager to deflect external pressure for change often play on these concerns to taint reformers who accept U.S. support as national traitors. All this means that the United States cannot pursue democracy promotion with the expectation that its efforts will be welcomed with gratitude, and that it should expect much public criticism and suspicion of its efforts, especially initially, even by the same people who may privately press the United States to push for democracy in their countries. Several steps can help improve the situation somewhat. The United States will gain credibility by doing more than talking about democracy—that is, by making hard decisions and taking difficult steps on behalf of democratic change and human rights, not once or twice, but regularly and over a period of time. U.S. rhetoric that is particularly careful to give credit for change to reformers in the region and that echoes themes and issues important to Arabs themselves will be welcome. Ultimately, much of the antagonism will dissipate only with a broader improvement in relations between the United States and the region, specifically with a stabilization of the situation in Iraq and a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

—Fifth, each Arab country has its own reform dynamics, opportunities, and challenges, based on its history, socio-economic conditions, and political landscape. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to democracy promotion in the Middle East. U.S. strategies to promote democratic change must be country-specific, grounded in local realities, and responsive to local needs and priorities.

TOOLS

The main tools available to the United States to encourage democratic change in Arab countries are diplomatic engagement and democracy aid. The administration must strive to use both in a mutually-reinforcing fashion because neither on its own will be effective.

—*Diplomatic engagement.* So far, the Bush administration's highest-profile diplomatic initiative to promote political, economic and educational reform in the Arab world is the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA), conceived by the White House and launched by the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized countries at its June 2004 meeting. Target countries are Arab nations along with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkey. BMENA includes an annual reform summit, titled 'Forum for the Future,' designed to generate reform priorities and commitments on the part of target countries, multilateral dialogues on democracy assistance and other reform-related aid, and donor-sponsored programs in areas such as micro-

finance and literacy. BMENA, which has so far convened once, in Rabat, last December, has some potentially valuable aspects. It signals to Arab governments that political reform is a transatlantic, not just an American, priority. It can help to foster a sense of competition among Arab governments on reform, as participating countries vie to be in the reform spotlight at BMENA gatherings and collect accolades from donor nations. The inclusion of civil society activists and representatives of the private sector—albeit only those carefully vetted by the United States and by Arab governments—in some Forum for the Future meetings helps to legitimize the role of non-governmental voices in the reform debate and injects new ideas into the discussion.

Overall, however, BMENA is of rather limited use. For one thing, most Arab countries resent BMENA or do not take it seriously. Unlike the Cold War's Helsinki process, on which BMENA reportedly was modeled and which incorporated issues important to the Soviet Union, BMENA addresses Western government's security needs—reform—but not target Arab governments' regional priorities, namely the Arab-Israeli conflict, weapons proliferation, Iraq, emigration, or terrorism. It also lacks a clear source of funding. This deprives BMENA of any real incentive for Arab governments to participate and any real leverage to press them to make actual progress on reform. Arab regimes also oppose being "lumped together" with non-Arab Muslim countries such as Turkey or Afghanistan with which they feel they have little in common, and view the very concept of a "broader Middle East" as an attempt to weaken Arab identity. For another, as with Arab League meetings, BMENA's regional nature means that in order to secure the endorsement of Arab countries as different as Saudi Arabia and Tunisia, its reform declarations—such as "advancing relations between the region's governments and civil society"—will be so general and watered down as to be meaningless at the level of individual countries, effectively giving Arab governments an easy way to wiggle out of agreeing to specific reforms they would prefer to avoid. For all these reasons, BMENA risks being simply a talk shop, one that absorbs large amounts of U.S. officials' time with little pay-off.

More promising is the investment of American political capital at the bilateral level, through the launching of policy dialogues on political reform with individual Arab governments. Such dialogues should reflect local priorities and revolve around specific reforms that would:

- expand political contestation (for example by legalizing new political parties or improving the quality of elections), >
- empower representative institutions (for instance by expanding the powers of local governments and parliaments), >
- improve human rights conditions (by implementing reforms in criminal procedure, improving prison conditions, and strengthening human rights watchdog groups); and
- promote pluralism and open up space for peaceful political activity (by allowing independent media, protecting journalists' rights, and reducing state control over civil society organizations).

U.S. embassy officials should also meet regularly with a wide range of non-governmental organizations, political parties, and other opposition groups to solicit their views on political reform and to send a clear message that Arab governments are not the U.S.'s only interlocutor on these issues. In addition, reform topics—as specific as possible—should be on the talking points of every high-level meeting between U.S. > and Arab officials, both in the region and in Washington.

Most Arab governments are not going to carry out such reforms simply because the United States raises them in a policy dialogue. Therefore, the United States should be prepared, at key strategic moments, to supplement dialogue with diplomatic sticks and carrots. These could include postponing or canceling or scheduling important visits, slowing or speeding up the dispersal of economic or military aid, and withholding action on or pushing for economic and trade issues important to Arab governments. The United States should also consider the option of conditioning economic or military aid on political reforms, recognizing that such conditionality is often less effective than imagined due to the local backlash and nationalist sentiment it can spark and to the difficulty of devising and measuring reform benchmarks.

Public rhetoric is an essential supplement to private diplomacy. Going forward, more important than President Bush's broad exhortations about the need for freedom and liberty in the Middle East are regular statements by senior U.S. officials—including the President when appropriate—about specific political reform issues in specific countries, because they are harder for Arab governments to ignore. To avoid over-praising modest or cosmetic reform steps, as the United States often has tended to do, public statements should be carefully calibrated to welcome Arab govern-

ments' reformist promises or moves, while indicating that the United States expects further progress. Recent U.S. statements on political reform in Egypt have struck an appropriate balance in this regard. The United States should also make every effort to speak out not just on behalf of individual reform advocates it happens to favor, such as Ayman Nour, the pro-Western leader of Egypt's liberal Al Ghad party whom the Egyptian government arrested earlier this year, but also on behalf of broader themes of due process and political and civil rights for all Arab citizens.

Would pressuring Arab governments to implement significant political reform jeopardize key U.S. interests in other areas, such as economic cooperation, Arab-Israeli peace-making, or counter-terrorism? Frankly, it is impossible to predict exactly how each Arab government would react, because there is no precedent for it in U.S. Middle East policy. At a minimum, an assertive U.S. democracy promotion policy is likely to introduce significant tension into U.S. relations with Arab regimes, in some cases exacerbating existing antagonisms over the Iraq war or September 11. These tensions undoubtedly will complicate U.S. diplomacy on Iraq, the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, and other issues; some Arab governments may unleash anti-American vitriol in the state-run media, or refuse to acquiesce to U.S. requests for assistance in areas they do not consider vital interests. But cooperation on issues that Arab governments consider crucial to their own interests—such as counter-terrorism, oil and gas production, or economic ties—probably will continue, albeit under strained circumstances. And more to the point, would such pressure have an effect? The impact will be greatest when it coincides with and reinforces indigenous demands for change. Realistically, the United States should be prepared for some Arab governments to dig in their heels and resist outside pressure in the name of national sovereignty.

—*Democracy aid.* Democracy assistance is the second pillar of a U.S. democracy promotion strategy. Aid should be directed primarily to non-governmental organizations and institutions with as little interference in project selection and implementation by host-country governments as possible. When appropriate, some democracy assistance can also go to promising government-led initiatives that emerge from governments, such as independent electoral commissions, human rights commissions, parliamentary research centers, or media oversight councils. What should be avoided are aid projects that inadvertently help to strengthen the tools of authoritarian control, such as support to corrupt electoral authorities or closed state-run media.

The administration's flagship reform-oriented aid program, the two-and-a-half year-old Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), is a promising concept but so far has struggled to achieve its full effectiveness. MEPI suffers from a number of problems. As a program under the direct control of the State Department, it has low credibility in the region, is unlikely to fund projects that Arab governments don't like but that may be needed to help to push open political systems, such as support for opposition parties or robust election observation, and is open to misuse as a tool to advance other regional policy goals. This is the worst of all worlds and too many directions for an aid program to be pulled in simultaneously. Although MEPI originally was designed primarily to promote local, grass-roots Arab reform initiatives, much of its funding has been awarded to American organizations working in the region. Finally, the challenge of promoting democratic change in the authoritarian countries of the Middle East requires especially thoughtful, strategic and innovative projects that are carefully devised for each country context and in some cases that take programmatic risks. However, MEPI does not appear to operate in such a strategic manner, instead funding mostly a hodge-podge of short-term projects that are not particularly cutting-edge and that sometimes even replicate unsuccessful democracy aid programs already implemented in Arab countries. Finally, MEPI does not have a significant on-the-ground presence of staff who are deeply knowledgeable about democracy promotion and Arab political culture or who will remain in their positions long enough to conquer a steep learning curve.

For all these reasons, as a leading expert has already recommended and MEPI officials reportedly are already considering, MEPI should be transformed into a private foundation similar to the Asia Foundation.^{1[1]} Although still funded by Congress, such a foundation would not have the stigma of being an arm of the U.S. government that is so damaging in the Arab world these days, nor would it be forced to work within the narrow confines or short-term demands of U.S. policy. This would help it establish credibility and reach out to a more diverse group of Arab partners. A foundation would be more successful at attracting long-term staff who are experts in the region and in democracy aid and who would run MEPI programs out of offices in each Arab country. Because U.S. officials do need to have the ability to spend reform funds directly, a portion of funds from the MEPI pot should be available annually to the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

A note on the paradox of MEPI funding is in order here. MEPI has received close to \$294 million in funding since its inception in FY 2002. In one sense, at just \$73.5 million per year for expenditure in as many as 13 countries, this amount appears quite meager in light of the administration's declared priority of transforming the Middle East: it is a fraction of U.S. military aid and of Iraq reconstruction funds. Indeed, Arab commentators have harshly criticized MEPI funding as a pittance. Yet at the same time, MEPI often has struggled to spend the funds it does have. In part this was due to slow start-up; the initiative is running much more smoothly now. But it also reflects a deeper challenge: the limited absorptive capacity for reform aid of most Arab countries. Unlike Eastern European countries after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, these are not societies undergoing sweeping and rapid political, social and economic transformations in which huge amounts of outside aid is easily absorbed and productively used. At most, they are authoritarian countries with modest political openings and limited numbers of viable aid counterparts. While MEPI certainly would welcome a boost in its aid or at least assurances of annual funding, given this reality at this stage it is more important to spend limited MEPI funds wisely and strategically than to pour in huge amounts of aid that is not likely to have much effect.

—*Additional tools.* Congress has a valuable role to play in supporting the administration's reform policies, by holding hearings on democratic change in the region; by hosting reformers from the region; by issuing statements in support of Arab dissidents; by raising reform with Arab governments during members' visits to the region; by appropriating reform aid wisely.

[NOTE: A revised version of Ms. Hawthorne's prepared statement, submitted at a later date, can be found in the Appendix.]

Chairman HYDE. Well, thank you, Ms. Hawthorne, very much.

We will now take questions or ask you questions. You will take the question, and first Mr. Lantos.

Mr. LANTOS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and let me at the outset congratulate and commend all five of our witnesses. Every single one of them has done an outstanding job, and I am personally grateful to them.

I have a plethora of questions and I will try to condense them, and hope you give me your most candid and concise response.

I have just returned, 2 weeks ago, from Algiers, Dr. Layachi, and my question to you really relates to the second election of President Bouteflika which seems to have been significantly different from his first. I would be grateful if you would comment on that.

If I may move to Dr. Ghadbian, you gave what to me was the most impressive discussion of Syrian opposition and democratic forces that I have heard in a long time, and I would like to really raise two issues with you. In my regular visit to Syria, and in my last meeting with President Asad, I sensed that he has not yet come to terms with the reality that there is a new dawn in the region. It is obvious that Syria is still on the losing side of history, pursuing a dead-end policy, and the most dramatic example of that, as we all realize, was of course the assassination of President Hariri. It is quite obvious when you ask the fundamental question—Who benefits from that tragedy?—it is quite clear that the independent forces of Lebanon do not, because he was in the process of consolidating Lebanese independence as a very charismatic leader and wiping out that charismatic leader has left a very powerful vacuum.

In my meetings with President Asad, I pointed out to him that the road is wide open for him to make an 180-degree turn as Colonel Ghadafi has done. I made that point to the Syrian foreign minister, and quite frankly, I am surprised that Libya preceded Syria in recognizing the wave of the future because the wave of the fu-

ture is not going to be the Ayatollahs in Tehran and the terrorists wherever they are making their plans.

So I would like to, because I very much agreed with your policy recommendations, I would like to ask you to specifically focus in on the question of whether President Asad, in your judgment, is capable of making a dramatic change because that is a fundamental question with respect to Syria. Certainly the Syrian people are more than ready for a different path, that is evident from our observations and from your comments.

On Egypt, Dr. Hamzawy, I would like to ask you to comment specifically on an amendment that Chairman Hyde and I supported in the last session of Congress when I went to Egypt last, this was sort of the sole topic of conversation. My amendment, so I can be specific, called for reducing aid to Egypt by not one penny, but shifting some of the military aid to educational, medical, and similar type of aid.

Egypt clearly faces no military threat from any of its neighbors, and the notion that \$1.3 billion in military aid should be frozen in our relationship with Egypt ad nauseam and ad infinitum is an absurdity. I shall renew my effort, hopefully with the support of the Chairman, to shift some of our military aid to Egypt into educational, health, similar type of aid, and I would like to get your reaction to that.

You made excellent observations, Ms. Hawthorne, along many lines. The point you made which I think is particularly valuable is that we are infinitely more likely to be successful on a bilateral than on a regional basis.

On a regional basis, as you stated correctly, programs and policies and goals are watered down to meaningless generalities, and our ability to effect significant change is dramatically greater on a bilateral basis than in terms of regional approaches.

That was our approach vis-a-vis Central and Eastern Europe. We took every single country as a very different and unique entity because the realities in each country were totally different, and while our policies were aiming at the same broad goals, they were tailored to the conditions of each country, and I think you are absolutely correct in calling for this in the Middle East.

So Dr. Layachi, if you would begin.

Mr. LAYACHI. Thank you. The last election was indeed a unique event in the history of independent Algeria. It was the most vibrant campaign that preceded it. And the incumbent President, for the first time a civilian, had to fight, to really get tough muscle with the electorate in order to remain in place, and that was a wonderful development indeed, and something that the Algerians had never lived through before. And of course we all hope that that will be conciliated in the coming years.

The fact that that is the way the campaign went and the result was also outstanding in a sense that people did not expect him to win by such a huge margin over those who were running against him, especially his former prime minister, and it was an overwhelming victory.

And probably what that did was that it consolidated, in a sense, the civilian power in the hands of the Presidency, and he always said, he said it from the start in his first time, he said I do not

want to be half President, I want to be full President, meaning that he wanted to exercise the powers of the Presidency as given to him by the Constitution rather than see some other elements among the power elite exercise some of those powers, and which really meant trying to take away power from the military.

And after his election, in fact, there was the resignation of the top military general, and we all hope that this will be consolidated unless, of course, unless he feels like he would need another term, and then call for an amendment to the Constitution. We hope it does not go that way as it has happened in other countries in the region.

There were some problems with the campaign raised by the opposition. One, the opposition did not have equal access to the media. They were completely—because the media, especially TV and radio, are still owned by the state. There are no private radios, no private TV stations, and they are owned by the state, and therefore they did not give a fair access, according to the criticism of the opposition, to the candidates running against the President, and this is one thing that hopefully will be fixed in the next election of Algeria, to move toward a true democratic process.

I think what we expect to see is this election legitimize or increase the legitimacy of the civilian, and hopefully this will lead to maybe—maybe some people think even those cases are completely different—the Turkish type of situation where the civilians will manage the affairs of society on a daily basis, and that they will be the army maybe that will serve as a guardian of the republican order, and some people are wishing that such things could happen.

But if that is what Algeria should be moving toward, and it is up to the Algerians to decide, of course, then how could that be nurtured from the outside?

If we look at the case of Turkey again and how the promise of joining the European Union has been pushing Turkey toward more and more reforms in regard to human rights, with regard to democracy, and other things. And if the United States could look into ways, as has already been said by my colleagues here, could find ways to nurture this positive development by putting on the table incentives, not necessarily denying things, but putting incentives for consolidating such movement toward much more regularized type of political process.

Thank you.

Mr. LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Dr. Ghadbian.

Mr. GHADBIAN. Thank you, Mr. Lantos.

I could not agree more with your assessment of the inability of Bashar to in fact understand the changes that have taken place in the region.

I do however, and allow me to respectfully disagree with your kind of presenting Ghadafi as a model for Syria and for the Arab world. I think while Ghadafi has made, in fact—

Mr. LANTOS. I do not think he is a model, but he represents 180-degree change with respect to weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. GHADBIAN. Right. And on those issues I agree, but I think we would like, in Syria, a model more of a Gorbachev, someone who would make changes both internationally and domestically.

Mr. LANTOS. Right, I buy that analogy.

Mr. GHADBIAN. I think the ideal situation in Syria is for Bashar, and in fact if he—now he claimed recently in a speech before the Parliament that he is no Saddam Hussein, and he said that in the context of accepting UN Security Council Resolution 1559.

However, we would like to see Bashar in fact making important domestic reforms, and I think he has really the last opportunity to do so, maybe during the general convention of the Baath Party in June. We would like him to amend the Constitution to end the Baath monopoly of power. We would like him to call for free elections and for him to withstand these elections.

I think we should send a strong message to Arab dictators that dynastic rule is something of the past, and it is very unfortunate that Bashar has now two sons, and that is scary for many theorians, and so we would like an elected President of Syria.

Thank you.

Chairman HYDE. We have three votes of 15 minutes each which means 25 minutes each, and they are on the energy bill, so rather than keep everybody in suspended animation for over an hour before we get back, we will submit questions to you in writing.

I want to congratulate you on a splendid presentation, very instructive on this very critical question, so thank you, and I am sorry we had to interrupt. We could have gone on quite a bit more.

The Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:58 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

REVISED PREPARED STATEMENT OF MS. AMY HAWTHORNE, MIDDLE EAST DEMOCRACY ANALYST AND FORMER FOUNDING EDITOR OF CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT'S "ARAB REFORM BULLETIN," WASHINGTON, DC

REVISED STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD AFTER THE HEARING BY AMY HAWTHORNE

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for inviting me to testify today. I congratulate you on convening this hearing on the important issue of reform and democracy in the Arab world. As someone who has been closely involved with Middle East democracy promotion for nearly a decade as both an analyst and a practitioner of democracy aid programs, I appreciate the opportunity to share with you my thoughts on how the United States most effectively can promote democratic change in Arab countries. With your permission, I will address the key points associated with formulating and implementing a viable democracy promotion policy in the region. My remarks will not address democracy-building in Iraq or the Palestinian territories, which in many respects are separate policy challenges.

The new U.S. emphasis on promoting democratic reform in the Arab world is welcome and long overdue. Yet, some three and a half years after the September 11, 2001 attacks that fixated U.S. attention on the Middle East's democracy deficit, U.S. democracy promotion policy is still a work in progress. Despite the bold declarations of President Bush and senior administration officials that democratic change in the Arab world is now a top U.S. priority, the United States has yet to integrate democracy promotion fully into its bilateral relations with Arab countries, to grapple with difficult policy issues, or to devise effective democracy assistance programs. U.S. policy is still marked by hesitancy about the risks associated with a more assertive democracy promotion stance in friendly Arab countries.

In fact, the risks are real, and cannot be wished away. Pursuing a robust democracy promotion policy may mean clashing with Arab regimes, bringing tension to relationships on which the United States still relies to advance its interests in the region. It means accepting the possibility that political openings may bring instability and may benefit forces that are not friendly to U.S. interests. It means reaching out to a much wider range of actors in Arab societies than the United States is accustomed to engaging. It means hard work on the ground and the commitment of significant resources over a period of many years, without any guarantee of immediate pay-offs to the United States. It also means accepting the limits of U.S. influence. As our experience in Iraq to date demonstrates, simply because the United States now has decided that democratic change in the region is in our national interest does not mean that Arab countries will magically transform themselves in response. We know from democratic transitions around the world that internal conditions are the most important factors in successful democratization, and the internal conditions in the Arab world are not particularly favorable.

Nonetheless, the United States possesses significant influence in the region, and we should wield it, whenever possible, not to impose our choices but to help create opportunities in which Arabs can decide how to move toward more open, participatory, just, and effective governance—in short, toward democracy. Such a transition is in the long-term interest of the United States and Arab countries. Many Arabs themselves want change, and it is difficult to imagine how Arab countries will be able to address successfully their complex political, economic, and security challenges with no change to the ruling status quo. To formulate an effective policy, the United States must strike a balance between reckless action and paralyzing caution and between careful strategic planning and flexibility to respond to

fast-breaking developments. The United States must be clear about its goals, must understand regional realities, and must use its available policy tools wisely.

POLICY GOALS

The overarching long-term U.S. policy goal should be to promote democratic change in Arab countries, rather than simply political reform or liberalization. This is a strategic, not just a semantic, distinction. Political liberalization essentially refers to a process in which non-democratic governments loosen some controls on political activity, such as by holding controlled elections for institutions without much power, permitting limited civic activism, or allowing greater debate in the media, without loosening their grip on power and without creating a pathway toward democratization—in short, without changing who rules and how. To one degree or another, most Arab governments have been carrying out such reforms since the 1980s and 1990s. Such political liberalization has helped foster greater pluralism in Arab countries and has served as a safety valve for some popular discontent. But the process has not fundamentally altered the political environment in any Arab country. Thus the United States should not endorse such reforms as sufficient and should instead press for deeper and broader changes that expand political competition and extend the boundaries of peaceful political activity and debate, that empower institutions, such as parliaments, that represent citizen interests and that can help to check the power of the executive, that significantly improve human rights conditions, and that make governance more transparent and accountable. Such changes can, over time, create a pathway in which alternatives to ruling regimes can organize and compete for power through democratic elections, and in which democratic institutions of governance can be established—developments that truly would signal a breakthrough in the Middle East.

Such a policy goal does not imply that every Arab country is destined to evolve into a Western-style democracy, Saudi Arabia being the leading such example. But it does suggest that a more democratic future is possible for the numerous Arab republics and monarchies that have in place many of the trappings, but not yet the substance, of democratic systems. A policy that adopts the reform of existing systems as its long-term objective effectively endorses the status quo and sends the message that Arabs should never aspire to build new, more democratic orders. Nor does a policy goal of democratic change mean that the United States should suddenly pull out all the stops and recklessly push for abrupt political openings; such an approach would likely end in failure. Rather, the task ahead of the United States is to push wisely for incremental but real democratic change.

REGIONAL REALITIES

The United States must approach the task of democracy promotion with a clear understanding of often sobering regional realities.

—First, while the current reform ferment in the region is genuine, it is also fragile, uneven across the Arab world, and only one aspect of a complex regional political landscape. Contrary to analysis popular in Washington these days, the current ferment did not suddenly originate with the Iraqi elections in January or even with the Bush administration's heightened attention to Middle East democracy since the attacks of September 11, 2001. Rather, it is an intensification of a liberalizing trend that has ebbed and flowed in the region since the 1980s. Earlier waves of reform have been incomplete and reversible. To be sure, important new factors in the region—including the potential positive demonstration effect of Iraq, the spread of new technologies including pan-Arab media and the Internet through which Arab publics can be mobilized, and the heightened interest of Western powers in democratic change—may make the current reform wave more promising. Yet, ruling regimes and others determined to preserve the status quo remain extremely strong. Iraq could just as easily become a negative model. Forces pushing for reform are still weak, lacking in mass support, and easily fragmented and co-opted by regimes. Reformers in many countries increasingly agree on the desirability of political change, but differ on how it should come about as well as on key issues of economic and social policy. Across the region, important constituencies such as labor and business have yet to weigh in on the side of democratic change. Some countries, such as Algeria, Tunisia, and Yemen, have so far been touched only lightly by the ferment. All this points to the need for the United States to avoid declaring a premature victory for a so-called Arab democratic spring and to acknowledge and plan for the huge challenges that lie ahead.

—Second, in promoting reform the United States must be prepared to work with civil society and other non-governmental forces pushing for change as well as with Arab governments. Pro-reform civil society movements are still too weak to be deci-

sive on their own, and large segments of Arab publics are still too suspicious of U.S. democracy promotion activities to be the leading partner of the United States. Nonetheless, the United States must expand its circle of civil society interlocutors beyond the narrow group of Westernized non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with which it typically deals to include groups with broader local support such as professional associations, political parties, labor unions, and religious institutions. At least until the current circumstances change, Arab governments should be the main focus of U.S. democracy promotion efforts, mainly as targets of U.S. pressure for meaningful reform but also as partners, if promising governmental reform initiatives occur.

—Third, democratic change in Arab countries may not be an immediate antidote to the phenomenon of violent Islamist radicalism. To be sure, democratic openings in the region would amplify the voices of those who oppose extremism and violence and who advocate liberal values, tolerance, and moderation in religion. But such openings will probably not, in the short and medium-run, compel the followers of Al Qaeda and similar groups to abandon their cultish cause. Those drawn to Islamist radicalism are of such diverse national origin and socio-economic, educational and personal backgrounds that we must assume that they are motivated by reasons that include not only resentment over political repression and exclusion but distorted religious beliefs, thwarted ambition, social alienation, and anger over Muslim countries' weakness vis a vis the West. The creation of more open, democratic systems will not, in and of itself, necessarily address such grievances among people operating on the fringes of their own societies. In addition, as we have seen in Iraq, democratizing countries are often unstable and weakly governed after long-standing security controls dissolve and before a new order takes hold, creating conditions in which violent, radical groups can gain a foothold.

—Fourth, across the Arab world, Islamist opposition groups are major political and social forces with significant popular support. The main focus of U.S. democracy promotion efforts should be to bolster political forces that could become alternatives to both Islamist groups and incumbent regimes. But the United States cannot afford to ignore or try to wish away the presence of Islamists in Arab politics. Instead, over the likely objections of many Arab governments, U.S. officials should begin to engage in regular dialogue with groups that shun violence and have professed their commitment to democratic principles. They include those that are already operating in the political sphere openly and legally, such as Jordan's Islamic Action Front or Yemen's Islah Party, and those that remain illegal but whose political participation is sometimes tolerated within strict limits, such as Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Such a U.S. policy does not mean providing support to Islamist groups, most of which would shun such aid anyway, or endorsing their positions. Rather, the purposes would be to understand better the full political landscape of Arab countries; to identify and build ties to moderates within these groups; to better understand what U.S. policies would contribute to the ascendancy of such moderates; and to signal that the United States is willing to accept election victories by Islamists who reject violence and accept democratic rules of the game.

Admittedly, engaging in such dialogue is not an appealing prospect. Islamist groups typically are hostile to U.S. policies in the region and deeply suspicious of U.S. motives in the Middle East, maintain very conservative, even illiberal, attitudes toward the rights of women and religious minorities, and hold vague positions on key elements of democracy such as the rotation of power and the rule of law. It is also risky. There is no guarantee that if Islamist groups gain power through elections they will abide by democratic rules and permit themselves to be voted out of office. Furthermore, dialogue with the United States is hardly going to be the determining factor in the ascendancy or marginalization of moderate Islamist forces: local socio-economic conditions, conflicts in Iraq and the Palestinian territories, and pressures in war on terrorism are all much more decisive influences. However, given the importance of Islamist groups in Arab politics and the importance of political Islamists' evolution into moderate actors who operate above ground, reject violence and play by democratic rules, the United States cannot afford not to engage with them at all. Furthermore, a U.S. policy that excludes them or that countenances their repression by Arab governments contributes to the widespread perception in the region that the United States is "anti-Muslim." Notably, the fact that in Iraq the United States just served as midwife to democratic elections that produced a victory by Shiite Islamist candidates and an Islamist prime minister, Ibrahim Jaafari, means that the Bush administration will find it difficult to avoid facing the issue of Islamist leadership elsewhere in the region.

—Fifth, resentment and even hostility are likely to dominate Arab reactions to U.S. democracy promotion efforts for some time to come. This will complicate efforts to build partnerships with reformers and frustrate those who expect U.S. democracy promotion to generate much pro-American sentiment. Many reformers are reluctant

to accept U.S. funding or otherwise to affiliate with the United States government. Some are skeptical that the United States is serious about pushing for democratic change, given its long history of support for autocrats and its countervailing interests. Others are suspicious of the U.S. government due to the unpopularity of its policies in the region and to fears that Western “democracy promotion” is a guise to weaken Islam and to Westernize Arab culture. Authoritarian governments eager to deflect external pressure for change often play on these concerns to taint reformers who accept U.S. support as traitors or foreign agents—a highly damaging charge in the Arab world. All this means that the United States cannot pursue democracy promotion with the expectation that its efforts necessarily will be met with gratitude and that it should expect much public criticism and suspicion of its efforts, especially initially, even by the same people who may privately press the United States to push for democracy in their countries. Several steps can help improve the situation somewhat in the short-term. The United States will gain credibility by doing more than talking about democracy—that is, by making hard decisions and taking difficult steps on behalf of democratic change and human rights, not once or twice, but regularly and over a period of time. U.S. rhetoric that is particularly careful to give credit for change to reformers in the region and that echoes themes and issues important to Arabs themselves will be welcome. Ultimately, much of the antagonism will dissipate only with a broader improvement in relations between the United States and the region, specifically with a stabilization of the situation in Iraq and a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

—Sixth, each Arab country has its own reform dynamics, opportunities, and challenges, based on its history, socio-economic conditions, and political landscape. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to democracy promotion in the Middle East. U.S. strategies to promote democratic change must be country-specific, grounded in local realities, and responsive to local priorities.

TOOLS

The main tools available to the United States to encourage democratic change in Arab countries are diplomatic engagement and democracy aid. The administration must strive to use both in a mutually-reinforcing fashion because neither on its own will be effective.

—*Diplomatic engagement.* So far, the Bush administration’s highest-profile diplomatic initiative to promote political, economic and educational reform in the Arab world is the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA), conceived by the White House and launched by the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized countries at its June 2004 meeting. Target countries are Arab nations along with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkey. BMENA includes an annual reform summit, titled “Forum for the Future,” designed to generate reform priorities and commitments on the part of target countries, multilateral dialogues on democracy assistance and other reform-related aid, and donor-sponsored programs in areas such as micro-finance and literacy. BMENA, which has so far convened once, in Rabat, last December, has some potentially valuable elements. It signals to Arab governments that reform is a transatlantic, not just an American, priority. It can help to foster a sense of competition among Arab governments on reform, as participating countries vie to be in the reform spotlight at BMENA gatherings and to collect accolades from donor nations. The inclusion of civil society activists and representatives of the private sector—albeit only those carefully vetted by the United States and by Arab governments—in some Forum for the Future meetings helps to legitimize the role of non-governmental voices in the reform debate and injects new ideas into the discussion.

But BMENA also has significant limitations as a democracy promotion tool. Most Arab countries resent BMENA or do not take it seriously. Unlike the Cold War’s Helsinki dialogue process, which included issues important to the Soviet Union, BMENA addresses Western government’s security needs—reform—but not Arab governments’ security priorities. It also lacks a clear source of funding. This deprives BMENA of any real incentive for Arab governments to participate or leverage to press them to make progress on reform. Arab regimes also oppose being “lumped together” with non-Arab Muslim countries such as Turkey or Afghanistan with which they feel they have little in common, and view the very concept of a “broader Middle East” as an attempt to weaken Arab identity. Furthermore, as with Arab League statements, in order to secure the endorsement of Arab countries as different as Saudi Arabia and Tunisia, BMENA’s initiatives and declarations—such as “advancing relations between the region’s governments and civil society”—are likely to be so general and watered down as to be meaningless at the level of individual countries. This effectively gives Arab governments an easy way to wiggle out of

agreeing to specific reforms they would prefer to avoid. For these reasons, BMENA risks being simply a talk shop, one that absorbs large amounts of U.S. officials' time with little payoff.

More promising is the investment of American political capital at the bilateral level, through the launching of policy dialogues on political reform with individual Arab governments. Such dialogues should reflect local priorities and revolve around specific reforms that would:

- expand political contestation (for example by legalizing new political parties or improving the quality of elections),
- empower representative institutions (for instance by expanding the powers of local governments and parliaments),
- improve human rights conditions (by implementing reforms in criminal procedure, improving prison conditions, and strengthening human rights watchdog groups); and
- promote pluralism and open up space for peaceful political activity (by allowing independent media, protecting journalists' rights, and reducing state control over civil society organizations).

U.S. embassy officials should also meet regularly with a wide range of non-governmental organizations, political parties, and other opposition groups to solicit their views on political reform and to send a clear message that Arab governments are not the U.S.'s only interlocutor on these issues. In addition, reform topics—as specific as possible—should be on the talking points of every high-level meeting between U.S. and Arab officials, both in the region and in Washington. Some of this is already taking place with regard to specific Arab countries, but not yet consistently or comprehensively enough across the region.

Arab governments are not going to carry out such reforms simply because the United States raises them in a policy dialogue. Therefore, the United States should be prepared, at key strategic moments, to supplement dialogue with diplomatic sticks and carrots. These could include postponing or canceling or scheduling important visits, slowing or speeding up the dispersal of economic or military aid, and withholding action on or pushing for economic and trade issues important to Arab governments. The United States should also consider the option of conditioning economic or military aid on political reforms, recognizing that such conditionality is often less effective than imagined due to the local backlash and nationalist sentiment it can spark and to the difficulty of devising and measuring reform benchmarks.

Public rhetoric is an essential supplement to private diplomacy, and President Bush's broad exhortations about the need for freedom and liberty in the Middle East have caught the attention of Arab leaders and publics alike. Going forward, more important are regular statements by senior U.S. officials—and by the President when appropriate—about specific reform issues in specific countries. These are harder for Arab governments to ignore. To avoid over-praising modest reform steps by friendly Arab governments, as the United States often has tended to do, public statements should be carefully calibrated to welcome such steps, while indicating that the United States expects further progress. Recent U.S. statements on political reform in Egypt have struck an appropriate balance in this regard. The United States should also make every effort to speak out not just on behalf of individual reform advocates it happens to favor, such as Ayman Nour, the pro-Western leader of Egypt's liberal Al Ghad party whom the Egyptian government arrested earlier this year, but also on behalf of broader themes of due process and political and civil rights for all Arab citizens.

Would pressuring Arab governments to implement significant political reform jeopardize key U.S. interests in other areas, such as economic cooperation, Arab-Israeli peace-making, or counter-terrorism? Frankly, it is impossible to predict exactly how each Arab government would react, because there is no precedent for it in U.S. Middle East policy. At a minimum, an assertive U.S. democracy promotion policy is likely to introduce significant tension into U.S. relations with Arab regimes, in some cases exacerbating existing antagonisms over the Iraq war or September 11. These tensions undoubtedly will complicate U.S. diplomacy on Iraq, the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, and other issues; some Arab governments may unleash anti-American vitriol in the state-run media, or refuse to acquiesce to U.S. requests for assistance in areas they do not consider vital interests. But cooperation on issues that Arab governments consider crucial to their own interests—such as counter-terrorism, oil and gas production, or trade and military relations—probably will continue, albeit under strained circumstances. More to the point, would such pressure have an effect? The impact will be greatest when it coincides with and reinforces indigenous demands for change. Realistically, the United States should be prepared

for some Arab governments to dig in their heels and resist outside pressure in the name of national sovereignty.

—*Democracy aid.* Democracy assistance is the second pillar of a U.S. democracy promotion strategy. Aid should be directed primarily to non-governmental organizations and institutions with as little interference in project selection and implementation by Arab governments as possible. When appropriate, some democracy assistance can also go to promising government-led initiatives, such as independent electoral commissions, human rights commissions, parliamentary research centers, or media oversight councils. What should be avoided are aid projects that inadvertently help to strengthen the tools of authoritarian control, such as support to corrupt electoral authorities or closed state-run media.

The Bush administration's flagship reform-oriented aid program, the two-and-a-half-year-old Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), has many worthwhile elements, but so far has not been successful in supporting enough of the right people or programs. MEPI's status as an initiative under the direct control of the State Department is debilitating. Many Arab activists and reformers who would benefit greatly from support steer clear of the program for fear that receiving MEPI funds will taint them locally as agents of the U.S. government. As a result, most MEPI political reform funds touch only a very narrow segment of political actors—Westernized elites who are willing to cooperate with the U.S. government. MEPI appears to avoid funding projects that would make Arab regimes uneasy—even though these are often the programs needed to open up political space. It is also subject to pressures from within the administration that could lead to its inappropriate use as a tool to generate pro-American sentiment or to reward Arab governments friendly to U.S. interests that have little to do with reform. MEPI also lacks an adequate presence in the region or sufficient numbers of staff who are democracy promotion experts and have deep local knowledge (most are foreign service officers or civil servants who tend to rotate out of their positions after a couple of years). It has not developed clear country strategies or innovative projects designed to push the political envelope. Instead, MEPI mainly has funded a hodge-podge of rather superficial, safe, and not very innovative projects, some of which even replicate previous democracy aid programs already implemented in Middle East without great success. The fact that although MEPI originally was designed primarily to promote grass-roots Arab reform initiatives most projects have been awarded to U.S. organizations is further evidence that the initiative is not working as it should.

For all these reasons, as a leading expert has already recommended, MEPI should be transformed into a private foundation similar to the Asia Foundation [Thomas Carothers, "A Better Way to Support Middle East Reform," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace *Policy Brief* No. 33, February 2005]. Even backed by funds from Congress, a privately-run foundation would have a much better chance of being seen as independent and credible in the region and would be freed from diplomatic pressures that could distort its work. It would also be more successful at attracting long-term staff who are experts in the region and in democracy promotion, and could more easily establish an effective presence across the region to build ties to a wide range of potential local partners and identify needs and opportunities. Because U.S. officials do need to be able to spend some reform funds directly, a portion of funds from the MEPI pot should be available annually to the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

A note on the paradox of MEPI funding is in order here. MEPI has received close to \$294 million in funding since its inception in FY2002. In one sense, at just \$73.5 million per year for expenditure across as many as 13 countries, this amount appears quite meager in light of the administration's declared priority of transforming the Middle East: it is a fraction of U.S. military aid and of Iraq reconstruction funds. Indeed, Arab commentators have harshly criticized MEPI funding as a pittance. Yet at the same time, MEPI often has struggled to spend the funds it does have. In part this was due to slow start-up; the initiative is running much more smoothly now. But it also reflects a deeper challenge: the limited absorptive capacity for reform aid of most Arab countries. Unlike Eastern European countries after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, these are not societies undergoing sweeping and rapid political, social and economic transformations in which huge amounts of outside aid is easily absorbed. At most, they are authoritarian countries with modest political openings and limited numbers of viable aid counterparts. While MEPI certainly would welcome a boost in its aid or at least assurances of annual funding levels, at this stage it is probably better to spend limited MEPI funds wisely than to devote more aid than can be used productively.

—*Additional tools.* Congress has a valuable role to play in supporting the administration's reform policies, by holding hearings on democratic change in the region; by issuing statements in support of Arab dissidents across the political spectrum,

not just those who are pro-American; by raising reform with Arab governments during members' visits to the region; by appropriating reform aid wisely; and when necessary, by pushing the administration on thorny policy issues it would prefer to avoid. In addition, expanding U.S. government and private sector-based programs in educational and professional exchange and dialogue between the United States and Arab countries will weave networks of personal ties and shared goals that are crucial to advancing the cause of democratic change in the Middle East.

RESPONSES FROM AMR HAMZAWY, PH.D., SENIOR ASSOCIATE, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, WASHINGTON, DC, TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE HENRY J. HYDE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, AND CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Question:

How is Gamal Mubarak, President Mubarak's son, head of the ruling National Democratic Party viewed in Egypt? Is he likely to be a candidate in upcoming Presidential elections?

Response:

It is important to clarify that Gamal Mubarak is not head of the ruling NDP, he is Policy Secretary of the party. Gamal Mubarak head the reform-oriented faction of the NDP, with addresses issues of economic and political reform in Egypt. While he certainly is a central figure in the ruling party, he is currently not a candidate to the presidency.

Question:

Do you think that the arrests of Ayman Nour and other democratic activists are part of an organized effort by the Egyptian government to limit competition to future Presidential candidates supported by the current ruling class?

Response:

The arrests of Ayman Nour and other democratic activists prove that far from championing democratic reforms, the Egyptian government continues to consolidate its own power. These arrests are part of a strategy aiming to limit the existing public space available for the articulation of democratic alternatives. With regards to the presidential candidacy, Egyptian opposition groups point to the May 10, 2005 amendment of article 76 of the constitution, approved by the two chambers of parliament and then via the May 25 public referendum. The opposition sees this amendment as imposing nearly impossible conditions for independent candidates to run in presidential elections, as well as the difficult conditions for opposition parties to get candidates on the presidential ballot from 2011 onward (the party would need to hold 5 percent of parliamentary seats).

Question:

The Muslim Brotherhood is a banned political party in Egypt, although many of their supporters run as independents in Egypt's elections. What is the base of support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt? How has the Muslim Brotherhood contributed to the political reform effort in Egypt? Are their calls for increased democratization genuine? If brought to power through democratic means, would the Muslim Brotherhood continue the practice of democratic competition, or are concerns of the "one-off election" valid?

Response:

Moderate Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, while not permitted to form political parties, probably have the largest constituency among the Egyptian public. These movements are well rooted in the Egyptian social and cultural fabric and possess therefore a great potential for forging broad alliances for political transformation. Their majority has been adopting a more pragmatist attitude based on prioritizing gradual reforms as the only viable strategy to promote democracy. This, however, does not mean that they are giving up their religious legacy and becoming wholeheartedly the new liberals of Egypt. Rather, they will always sustain their traditional agenda built around calls to implement the Islamic Law.

The crucial issue at stake here is that calling for democratic reform is becoming a central component of the Islamist agenda, if not its determining principle. It is interesting to note in the context of the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections, the Muslim Brothers have joined those who perceive international election

monitoring as having become an accepted practice globally, and support it in the case of Egypt.

With regards to whether concerns of the “one-off election” are valid, the Muslim Brotherhood is currently positioning itself within the national consensus regarding power-sharing and democratization. However, in order to integrate the Muslim Brothers in the political process, constitutional measures need to be taken in order to clearly define normative and practical limitations on the conduct of power by each political actor, complete with checks and balances. It is important to note that these measures are not relevant solely in the case of the Brotherhood, Egypt is in dire need of constitutional arrangements that will regulate the distribution of power and enforce democratic rules of the game regardless of who is elected.

Question:

What does the Egyptian Government’s response to recent street demonstrations held by the Kifaya (enough) Movement and the Muslim Brotherhood indicate about the ruling National Democratic Party’s commitment to liberalization and political reform?

Response:

As mentioned earlier, the recent crackdown on opposition movements and figures by government agents is designed to limit the existing public space available for the articulation of democratic alternatives. In the eyes of the opposition, the repressive response to the recent street demonstrations are part of a larger well-known strategy by Mubarak which is twofold: first, making cosmetic changes that do not touch the regime structure in any substantial way, and second, employing systematic repression against opposition forces.

Question:

What eligibility requirements is Parliament likely to set up for opposition candidates in the upcoming presidential election? What are the prospects for the National Democratic Party in the next round of elections?

Response:

Each registered political party will be permitted to field a candidate during the 2005 elections, but in future elections a party would need to have been licensed for at least five years and to hold at least 5 percent of the seats in the lower and upper houses of parliament to get on the ballot. Independent candidates would need to garner signatures from 250 elected officials, a mix of parliamentarians and local council members. The presidential election will be supervised by a commission composed of ten members, five senior judges and five nonpartisan figures.

The prospects of a victory for the National Democratic Party in the upcoming presidential elections are clearly quite high.

RESPONSES FROM AMR HAMZAWY, PH.D., SENIOR ASSOCIATE, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, WASHINGTON, DC, TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE TED POE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Question:

With regard to human rights reform in Egypt, what efforts is the Egyptian government making to address the continued issues of church repair and church construction-specifically as they relate to laws left over from the Ottoman Empire?

Response:

The government did undertake a number of initiatives to address the issues of church repair and church construction, including enacting new laws to end discrimination against Egyptian Copts in this context. The law dating from the Ottoman Empire that restricted the repair of churches by requiring approval from the president was rescinded first in 1998, by transferring the authority to governors to approve permits for repair of church facilities, then in 1999, by making the repair of all places of worship subject to a 1976 civil construction code. This represented a turning point in the issue of church repair and church construction because it effectively placed churches and mosques on equal footing before the law. Maintenance of church facilities has since been significantly improved.

Question:

I have received various reports about patterns of kidnapping, rape, and forced conversion of Christian girls to Islam. There are allegations that police officials block

efforts of the families to rescue their daughters. What is the government doing to prosecute the kidnappers and ensure the girls are restored to their family?

Response:

To my knowledge, these allegations were not verified.

Question:

As you know, the Egyptian Government lists everyone's religion on their ID card. There are numerous reports that people who change their religion are denied updates to these cards. What efforts is the Egyptian Government making to ensure equal treatment for people of all religions that choose to change their religion?

Response:

To my knowledge, these allegations were not verified.

RESPONSE FROM AMR HAMZAWY, PH.D., SENIOR ASSOCIATE, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, WASHINGTON, DC, TO QUESTION SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE J. GRESHAM BARRETT, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Question:

In the May/June 2005 edition of Foreign Affairs, the noted historian Bernard Lewis speculates that one of the key reasons that MEPI and other democracy-building programs we have tried to implement fail to resonate with many Arab Muslims is our use of the word "freedom." In our country and culture the word has many important and significant meanings, particularly the freedom from tyranny. However, Dr. Lewis believes it has a much narrower interpretations when translated to Arabic for Muslims in both historical and cultural context, in that it is seen as applying narrowly to freedom from slavery, and that a much better term to use would be "justice" as there is a long historical and religious context to the concept of a "just" government in the sense that the head of government should rise to power by a "just means" and should govern "justly." That is one of the reasons why Dr. Lewis believes the Loya Jirga worked so well in Afghanistan. Could you comment on this, and whether you think our intent would find greater resonance and success with the general populace in predominantly Arab Muslim nations if our policy and democracy-building programs stressed the importance of economic justice, political justice, etc.?

Response:

Justice is undeniably a central notion in Arab societies, one with individual and social connotations that resonate with the people of the region. However, freedom is also an accepted and well-known concept in Arab societies, and a crucial one in the push for democracy in the region. Opposition groups across the region have, over the past few years, taken to the streets demanding "freedom." Moreover, it is interesting to note that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)'s 2004 Arab Human Development Report is entitled *"Towards Freedom in the Arab World,"* hence it is very clear that we should not dismiss this quality as one that is irrelevant for Arabs.

RESPONSES FROM AZZEDINE LAYACHI, PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY, QUEENS, NEW YORK, TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE HENRY J. HYDE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, AND CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Question:

How would you assess the commitment of President Bouteflika and the Algerian government to democratization? To the extent that it is known, how does the military view democratization?

Response:

President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and many members of the government seem committed to a change, but the nature of the intended change has been elusive. The current political opening in Algeria began a decade before Bouteflika returned from a twenty-year self-exile in the Arab Gulf region and expressed the wish to become president. He had previously served as Foreign Minister during the socialist and authoritarian rule of the late President Houari Boumediene (1965–1978). The change he was committed to from the start included three main elements: 1) put an end

to the internal war waged by the Islamist rebellion; 2) take Algeria out of the international isolation that was caused by the war; and 3) diminish the power of the military establishment in Algeria's political system. He succeeded in the first two and is still working on the third. These three elements have constituted his top priorities. He also started processes of reforming the judicial educational systems and in mid-June 2005 he submitted to parliament a draft law against corruption.

Badly needed economic reforms have not yet been tackled and democracy has not been an explicit item on Bouteflika's agenda. He has seemed more eager to bring stability back to the country and entice foreign investors than willing to expand the political opening that began in 1989. While he has not recanted, or put into question, most of the gains made through such opening, in recent years he has acted to tighten the control of the independent press. In May 2001, new laws severely limited the press's freedom to criticize public official—including the president—in an insulting or demeaning way. The new laws were implemented with greater vigor after the re-election of Bouteflika—many commentators say that it was in retaliation against those who vehemently opposed his re-election. As a result, several journalists were tried and incarcerated. Furthermore, even though the Islamist rebellion has been quelled and security has improved tremendously, the government still refuses to lift the stage of siege that was imposed more than a decade ago.

While President Bouteflika does not have the characteristics of an autocrat, he seems to shun the diversity of opinions on major issues and he often engages his government—and the country—in important policies and actions without real consultation of either parliament or society. The only exception to this was the National Concord—amnesty for the Islamist rebels—which he submitted to a referendum in 1999.

Even though he is often accused of having “Bonapartist” tendencies, Bouteflika is genuinely interested in Algeria's well-being, rather than just in his own political survival or for the sake of burnishing a historical legacy. He has been able to co-opt both conservative holdovers from the previous era and moderate Islamists who see him as a good tactical ally. However, this has also made him a hostage to these two tendencies to the point that he has resisted liberal reforms and enacted—or maintained—some conservative policies since 1999.

The military institution has always been a powerful player in Algerian politics. It has also been known for most of its existence as the “La Grande Murette” (the Big Mute) because it communicated very little its views in the public arena. However, in the last few years, several high officers—retired or in office—started speaking out about past and present policies and events. Officially, the military establishment is committed to a democratic project and a republican form of government. In the last presidential election (April 8, 2004), the military, for the first time, publicly stated that they would play no role in choosing the next president. In a sense, that meant that their crucial support would not be extended to Bouteflika's re-election. This decision was probably due to a political showdown between him and them over the president's constitutional prerogatives, and his decision to authorize international organizations to investigate civilian massacres that the army allegedly could have prevented, but failed to do so. Because he was not explicitly endorsed or supported by the military, Bouteflika had to fight hard for his own re-election, which he won with a wide margin against an unorganized and divided opposition, which did not have access to the state resources and to the radio and television—both state-owned—which he had. The military remains a powerful actor in Algeria's political and economic systems, but there are many signs today that it is moving eagerly toward professionalization and away from blatant interference with the political and economic systems of the country. Its increasing interaction with the US and NATO military may be helping this welcomed tendency.

Question:

What is the status of opposition parties? Who are the major figures? How committed are they to democratic reforms? How prepared are they for a broader role in government?

Response:

Opposition parties are new in Algeria; they became legal only in 1989. Before then, and since independence from France in 1962, Algeria had only one party, the National Liberation Front. There are today many parties, but only a few of them have some relevance. Many people see them as out of touch with society at large and not useful in the aggregation and articulation of people's interests and grievances. The reasons behind this include:

- 1) the parties' relative youth (except for the FLN, but it too has little experience in a competitive environment)

- 2) the structure of political power in Algeria (the country's leader is still more important than all parties; he ignores or uses them when needed; and fiercely resents partisan dissent, as shown when the FLN split in two camps during the last electoral campaign), and the military remain kingmakers, in spite of what was done and said lately. In other words, there has not been a regime overhaul.
- 3) the party leaders' tendency to reign supreme over the rank and file and to be out of touch with the constituencies.
- 4) the weakness and powerlessness of institutions of popular representation, which makes political parties even less relevant because of their insignificant impact on major public policies.

The political parties are far from being mature political structures of representation and of governance. Hopefully, in the end, when there is real regime change, the accumulated experience may help them be ready for that day. In the meantime, they merely help legitimize the existing political order by reflecting a semblance of regime change and democracy (electoral at least). They also help co-opt challengers to the regime; and mobilize support for—or mute any resistance to—policies made by the president and his government.

Since 1997, when parliamentary life resumed after its suspension in 1992, several parties have had seats in parliament and have participated in government. The main parties today are:

- 1) Front de Liberation Nationale (National Liberation Front, FLN), which was the sole legal party from 1962 to 1989. After a series of electoral defeats, it made a big comeback in the 2002 parliamentary elections. It is led by Abdelaziz Belkhadem, former Foreign Minister. It is nationalist and conservative.
- 2) Rassemblement National Democratique (National Democratic Rally, RND) was born in 1995 to support the candidacy of President Liamine Zeroual; it is led by current Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia.
- 3) *Harakat Mujtama's al-Silm* (Movement of Society for Peace, MSP), formerly known as Hamas, was born in 1989. The current leader is Bouguerra Soltani (it founder and former leader Mahfoud Nahnah, a moderate Islamist, died in 2004). The party's aim is to establish Islamic regimes in all Muslim countries. It is close to Egypt's Muslim Brothers.
- 4) Front des Forces Socialistes (Front of Socialist Forces, FFS) was born in the 1960s and was illegal until 1989. It is led by Hocine Ait-Ahmed, a hero of the anti-colonial war. It is relatively liberal and a vocal opponent to the current regime. Its constituency is limited to ethnic Berberophones in a small region west of Algiers (Kabylie),
- 5) Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Democracy (Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) was born in 1989 as an essentially ethnic party which focuses on the Berber language and culture. It is relatively conservative and has supported the government in its fight against the Islamist rebellion. Its leader is Said Saadi.
- 6) *Harakah al-Nahda* (Renaissance Movement, or MN, known as *Ennahda*) was created by Abdellah Djaballah, who was ousted from it in 1998. The movement subsequently came under the control of Lahbib Adami. It is a relatively conservative Islamist party that is willing to work within the existing system.
- 7) *Harakat al-Islah al-Watani* (Movement of National Reform, or MRN, known as *Islah*) is led by Abdallah Djaballah, who created it in 1998 after his ouster from *Ennahda*. It is a relatively conservative Islamist party that competes with MSP.
- 8) *al-Jabha al-Islamiyya lil-inqadh* (Islamic Front of Salvation, FIS) was created in 1989 and banned in 1992; its two leaders, Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj were jailed from 1991 to 2003. The party has lost its structure and much of its social basis. It intended to establish an Islamic state and resorted to wide-scale violence in 1992 after it was denied its electoral victory.

The parties that dominate currently are the FLN and the RND which, in alliance with the MSP, form a powerful Islamic-conservative pro-government bloc in parliament. They are now seeking to extend such party cooperation at the municipal and county levels after the next local elections.

Question:

In what ways have U.S. officials encouraged Algeria's highest political leaders to pursue democratization and human rights reform? How receptive are Algerian leaders to reforms that might bring about a change in leadership? Are the Algerian people aware of U.S. initiatives and, if so how, how have they responded to them.

A: In what ways have U.S. officials encouraged Algeria's highest political leaders to pursue democratization and human rights reform?

Response:

There has not been much US pressure on the Algerian government to pursue democratization and human rights reform, except for the yearly State Department Reports on Human Rights Practices. When the military interfered with the 1992 elections and cracked down on, and banned, the winning party (FIS), the US government did not react with a call for the respect of the electoral process and human rights. It merely called on the government to engage in an all-inclusive political process. It certainly encouraged political opening, but did not pressure the government to end repression and human rights abuses, notably because that might have weakened its position in the war against radical Islamism, which had killed thousands of people and destroyed much of the social and economic infrastructures of the country by the end of the 1990s.

After September 11, 2001, the two countries became suddenly very close because they shared the dreadful consequences of terrorism. Algeria, which had gained a lot of experience in fighting armed Islamist rebels, attracted the attention of the White House and a new relationship developed. This relationship has been based mainly on security and economic interests. As William Willis noted in a Financial Times article on April 14, 2005, "Algeria is curiously absent from both Washington's hit list and Arab states that should move faster on political reforms as well as those efforts that are deemed worthy of occasional pat on the back."

B: How receptive are Algerian leaders to reforms that might bring about a change in leadership?

Since the political opening of 1989, the overall political culture has been slowly evolving. It has come to admit change in the formal leadership of the country through elections, in spite of the fact that many people believe that votes are always rigged by the power that be. There has been an evolution from the plebiscite of a single candidate from 1962 to the first multi-candidate presidential elections of 1995. However, the winner then was a retired general (Liamine Zeroual). The election of Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 1999 constituted the first one where the candidate was neither a military man nor an incumbent. His re-election in 2004 constituted another evolution since he was the first incumbent civilian to be re-elected through a competitive vote and without the express support of the military. All this certainly constitutes a positive evolution in the way Algeria chooses its highest leader, but the real test of change is at the level of the configuration of power among elected and non-elected institutions, on one hand, and between these institutions and society, on the other. This evolution in the way leadership change happens is good, but it must complement and be supported by the actual exercise of constitutional powers by those who are elected. In other words, the president should be able to exercise his powers fully, without the interference of the military, and those powers should be checked by a representative parliament and an independent judiciary.

C: Are the Algerian people aware of U.S. initiatives and, if so how, how have they responded to them.

People are aware of some of the US initiatives in Algeria, notably those related to aiding the government fight the remaining armed rebels and others initiatives widely reported by the Algerian press. The latter have included workshops organized by the National Conference on State Legislators for the training of Algerian legislators' staff; US Marines and Coast Guard exercises with their Algerian counterparts; and some assistance extended by the US embassy to a host of social and educational projects and activities. Ambassador Richard Erdman is highly active and visible in Algeria as he participates in cultural events, hands checks to charitable organizations, or announces new accords between the two countries. However, people in general remain very skeptical about US initiatives in Algeria, notably because they are in sharp contrast with some US policies in the MENA region. Some people believe that the US is interested in Algeria for only two things: creating an anti-terrorist front in the Algerian desert and oil. A lot of work needs to be done in order to dispel these suspicions. One way would be to make sure that US initiatives have a tangible benefit at the societal level—such as pressing for economic reforms that are tai-

lored to the country's current condition, not just based on neo-liberal principles which can make things worse than they already are.

Question:

What does the suppression of Bouteflika's critics in the press say about the President's commitment to and understanding of freedom and democracy?

Response:

President Bouteflika has never gotten along with the Algerian independent press. He perceives it as serving certain particular interests (i.e., his political rivals and those whose interests his policies threaten) and as lacking professionalism. He was especially angered by the way he was attacked by this press during the 2004 electoral campaign. Since he came to office, new laws were passed by an acquiescent parliament limiting the relative press freedom which was enjoyed for over a decade. Since his re-election last year, several journalists have been tried jailed just for having spoken their mind on some governmental practices or on some leaders, including the president himself. This crackdown, which constitutes a disproportionate response to what might be libel—in the worst case—casts serious doubts about the place of democracy and individual freedoms in Bouteflika's agenda for Algeria. Since the judicial branch is tightly controlled by the executive, the average Algerian has almost no means to resist and fight abuse of power by peaceful means.

Question:

How much power does the parliament have according to the constitution, and how much does it exercise in practice?

Response:

According to the constitution, the Algerian parliament has numerous prerogatives which could allow it to debate a long list of issues, make laws and oppose the government whenever necessary by voting down executive bills or by way of a no-confidence vote against the prime minister. However, presidential powers are so extensive that the president can by-pass parliament and enact the policies he wishes. If parliament were to truly exercise its constitutional powers, it may be able to check those of the executive branch, but it has not done so since parliamentary life returned in 1997. The pro-government coalition (FLN–RND–MSP), which overwhelmingly dominates parliament, usually supports governmental initiatives notably because every side finds an interest in this arrangement. Also, in the name of restoring political stability and foiling the ambitions of radical Islamists and radical Berberists, dissent is strongly discouraged.

For a genuine transition to a new political order, it is necessary that a balance exists—not only in the constitution, but also in actions—between the powers of the executive branch and those of the legislature. Also, the excessive concentration of power in the hands of the state at the expense of municipal and county (wilaya) governments should be replaced by a true decentralization and devolution of power. This would indeed help find local solutions to the many problems faced by people in several town, cities and wilayates of the country. Furthermore, the judiciary, which is currently subservient to the executive branch, needs a necessary independence. Moreover, independent associations representing differentiated interests in society should be enabled to have an impact on public policy, not just to exist as a symbolic showcase.

RESPONSE FROM AZZEDINE LAYACHI, PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY, QUEENS, NEW YORK, TO QUESTION SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE J. GRESHAM BARRETT, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Question:

In the May/ June 2005 edition of Foreign Affairs, the noted historian Bernard Lewis speculates that one of the key reasons that MEPI and other democracy-building programs we have tried to implement fail to resonate with many Arab Muslims is our use of the word "freedom." In our country and culture the word has many important and significant meanings, particularly the freedom from tyranny. However, Dr. Lewis believes it has a much narrower interpretation when translated to Arabic for Muslims in both historical and cultural context, in that it is seen as applying narrowly to freedom from slavery, and that a much better term to use would be "justice" as there is a long historical and religious context to the concept of a "just" government in the sense that the head of government should rise to power by a "just means" and should govern "justly." That is one of the reasons why Dr. Lewis believes

the Loya Jirga worked so well in Afghanistan. Could you comment on this, and whether you think our intent would find greater resonance and success with the general populace in predominantly Arab Muslim nations if our policy and democracy-building programs stressed the importance of economic justice, political justice, etc.?

Response:

All people in the MENA region have a good understanding of what freedom is. For them, it is a layered concept. The first freedom for which they fought hard and for which many lost their lives is the freedom from Western colonialism—whether it came in the form of protectorate, mandate or outright occupation and settlement as was case of the French in Algeria. For the Palestinians, it is the freedom from Israeli occupation and domination. Even though Western colonialism ended a while ago, some groups in MENA societies believe that freedom from Western influence and interference is yet to be gained. They have been fighting for this freedom for decades in peaceful and violent ways.

The second freedom is that from tyranny or unjust and unfair rulers. Several societal groups in a many countries are fighting today for this freedom using both peaceful and violent means. In the case of Algeria, one of the key anti-governmental slogans is that against “*hogra*” which means power abuse and disdain by agents of public authority (the police, the military, the bureaucrats, and event higher authorities) against average people. The fact that the judicial system is often partial, inefficient and even corrupt, makes things worse for people yearning for justice and respect. Freedom from *hogra* is a very high concern for most people.

The third freedom is that associated with civic rights such as the right to create associations and parties, to speak one’s mind and to publish, as well as the freedom of movement. While Algeria has made a tremendous progress in this area since 1989, a lot more remains to be done. This category of freedom is guaranteed by the constitution, but it is not necessarily respected by public authorities. Several journalists and independent thinkers were killed in the recent past by radical Islamists for speaking their minds and others have been jailed recently by the state for the same reason; and many dissenters in exile are afraid to return home.

To engage in a genuine process of democratization, it is absolutely necessary that the last two meanings of freedom be given a tangible expression in Algeria. Without such freedoms, the county would never make the transition. In fact, without it, the country may be engulfed in yet another and more devastating war between the state and society.

